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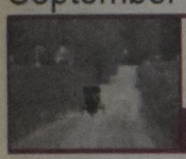

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59th year of publication

The school massacre in Ossetia: telling the story

Harry der Nederlanden

We've all seen the images. Bloodied, half-naked children being carried to waiting ambulances by men and women whose faces are etched with horror. Grief-stricken parents scanning rows of mangled bodies, checking lists posted on walls. Injured children of all ages smeared with blood looking dazed, uncomprehending after spending almost three days without food or water, having seen people they knew shot dead and tossed into a courtyard. A masked terrorist wielding a machine gun, his foot on a trigger attached to explosives spread around a gym filled with children, mothers and teachers.

H. DERNEDERLANDEN

It was the first day of school. Almost 1200 parents and children were gathered for the opening when the terrorists struck. Three days later, at least 338 people were dead, half of them children.

We've seen so many violent images on television and in magazines, we've almost become inured to them. When we see small children being used as pawns by terrorists, everything in us cries out in protest. The questions assert themselves with new urgency: Why? How can they? What drives people to commit such horrific acts? What inspires them? What value system permits or encourages such acts of barbarity? What can possibly justify such crimes?

Avoiding the obvious

There have always been conflicts, rebellions, wars, but acts of terrorism against women and children like those we've been seeing in increasing numbers in recent decades strike us as particularly evil and devoid of humanity.

The stories featured on television in the immediate aftermath of the massacre moved quickly from the brutal fact and the bloody images to the periphery. One story bounced quickly to Russian President Putin and his inflexible, harsh stance over toward the Chechen "separatists," dwelling at some length on the suffering of the Chechen people under Russian rule. Another interviewed bystanders about how Putin had handled the situation and talked about the incompetence of the security forces. The main actors to blame for the massacre, we were left to conclude, were the uncompromising tyrant Putin and the trigger-happy security forces.

Still another dwelt on the "ethnic violence" that has plagued the region, focusing on people in the neighboring region. Because some of the terrorists were from this Muslim area, they now lived in fear of the hatred and violence from the people of Ossetia. Instead

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At 10th anniversary, a far poorer Palestinian Authority

The four-year intifada has left the Palestinian economy – and government – in shambles.

Ilene R. Prusher

JERICHO, WEST BANK – When the doors of the Intercontinental Hotel opened here four summers ago, rooms were sold out and the managers had to turn people away. Today, it does not have a single guest and is kept running by a handful of people who watch the minutes tick by in crushing silence.

"When it's empty like this, every hour feels like a year," moans desk manager Jawdat Barakat, who earns a fourth of what he did in the days when the hotel was bustling. Many clients spilled in from the Oasis Casino next door – a joint Israeli-Palestinian investment which has since been shuttered. When the hotel opened, it employed 184 Palestinians. Only about 25 work here now.

Tourism was once the most promising sector of the Palestinian economy. Now business in Jericho, which bills itself as the oldest city in the world, has itself become fossilized.

Jericho's empty streets are a mirror of the downward spiral across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Ten years ago this week, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat gained major civilian powers for the first time as part of the Oslo Peace Accords. The Palestinian Authority (PA) soon gained the power to collect taxes, and run health, welfare, and tourism facilities, taking on the trappings of state-hood. Jericho was the first city from which Israeli forces withdrew, and, some say, the most keen to do business with Israelis.

But since the start of the intifada in late September 2000, the economy has been caught in a vicious cycle. In response to suicide bombings, Israel closed its borders to Palestinian workers, reoccupied cities it had turned over to the PA, and clamped down on Palestinian travel between cities. The latter, say people whose income was dependent on the tourism industry, is the primary reason why Jericho's economy is now virtually bust.

Most indicators point to a worsening of economic conditions – and an ever-rougher road for the PA leadership to survive its worst political crisis. Yet, while prominent Palestinians have become increasingly critical of life under the PA, decrying it as "lawless" and "chaotic," it continues to function as a de facto government – and the largest single employer in the Palestinian economy.

"The PA has managed to pay salaries ... that's the only symbol that it's still functioning," says Mohammed Shtayyeh, the director of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) in Ramallah.

The Intercontinental in Jericho wasn't alone in making huge layoffs. Approximately 90,000 people who were working in the Palestinian private sector before the intifada have since lost their jobs. But the loss of wages earned in Israel has hurt the most. Some 166,000 Palestinians used to work

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News

Ossetia

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of conveying the grief and horror of the stricken parents, we were shown their violent past: they too, the story suggested, were capable of such atrocities.

The print media followed similar paths. Invariably, the stories avoided speaking of Muslim terrorists. The conservative scholar Daniel Pipes, who has been busy tracking the political correctness that prevents the media from reporting honestly on Islam, provided an inventory of terms created to avoid speaking of Muslim terrorists. He recorded some 20 different euphemisms: from assailants to activists, from gunmen to guerillas, from insurgents to separatists, from commandos to militants.

Perhaps some of these terms arise partly from a writerly desire for variety, but when the words "terrorist" and "Muslim" are studiously avoided, questions must be raised.

"Does it shock you that the people who deliberately attacked a school and then systematically shot and blew up little children did so in the name of Islam?" asks columnist Dennis Prager.

We shouldn't be, he says, and gives a long list of atrocities committed in the name of Allah: slaughtering innocent human beings like animals; reintroducing slavery and genocide against blacks; executing women accused of adultery; burning Hindu temples and Christian churches, and many more. Prager does go on to say that most Muslims aren't militants, but he asks how often are the terrorists Christians, Jews or Buddhists who are acting in the name of their religion?

Islam and terrorism

This close identification between Islam and terrorism is, of course, what the mainline media are trying to avoid. It is a discriminatory stereotyping of a huge class of people. Such stereotyping, many are convinced is the root of most, if not all, violence, and must therefore be avoided at all costs. If reporting helps support or create such stereotypes, it doesn't contribute to understanding and tolerance (the highest value for many) but instead foments more hatred and violence in a never-ending cycle.

There is some truth to this point of view, and it is commendable that reporters operate with a conscience, reminding us constantly that there are wider contexts, institutional injustices and many kinds of hatred and violence in the world besides Muslim terrorism. There's also the multicultural angle: one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter.

Nevertheless, melting together all forms of force and violence does violence to our understanding of world events. As Daniel Pipes warns: "The multiple euphemisms for *terrorist* obstruct a clear understanding of the violent threats confronting the civilized world. It is bad enough that only one of five articles discussing the Beslan atrocity mentions its Islamist origins; worse is the miasma of words that insulates the public from the evil of terrorism."

On the other hand, although we must not shrink from seeing and naming the threat of Islamist terrorism plainly, we must not lose sight of local distinctions. In another article Pipes himself is careful to distinguish the Beslan school atrocity, though equally vicious, from the 9/11 attack on America. The pro-Chechnen terrorists had specific goals in mind, not just the demand to free prisoners but also for the independence of Chechnya. The 9/11 acts were simply to strike terror by killing as many people as possible. William Pfaff, an analyst for the *International Herald Tribune*, warns that conflating all acts of terrorism into an undifferentiated "international terrorism" loses sight of the differences between the indiscriminate terrorism of al Qaeda and the goal-oriented terrorism of the Chechen and Palestinian terrorists.

A war of stereotypes

Nevertheless, as many commentators reminded us, those who have committed terrorist acts in many different locations around the globe have invariably been Muslim. Increasingly when we hear the word "terrorist" we think of radical Islamists.

Is this a stereotype? And is this lamentable? Yes, undoubtedly. But more and more the stereotype is borne out. Not all Muslims are terrorists by any means, but in recent years nearly all terrorists are Muslims.

The efforts of the media to ascribe hatred and intolerance to fundamentalists of all religions and to remind us that people of every tribe and nation have been guilty of violence are laudable. But that should not blind us to the fact that the common factor is Islamic terrorism. It is Muslims, not Jews, Christians or Buddhists, who deliberately target children in schools and on school buses, who turn themselves into human bombs to kill as many civilians as possible, and who consider no tactic too barbaric to spread their terror.

This naturally raises questions about the assertion that Islam is a religion of peace. It raises the question posed by Prager: "Is there anything in Islam or the way Islam is now taught and practiced that dulls the conscience and thereby enables many religious Muslims to engage in or support atrocities that other groups, religious and secular, find inconceivable?" And why is it, people have been asking with ever greater insistence, that so few Muslim voices have been raised against the atrocities committed by their fellow religionists? It has been far easier to find Muslim clerics and leaders who excuse, defend or rationalize these horrendous acts. One Muslim cleric living in Britain even defended the slaughter of innocents in Beslan. "If an Iraqi Muslim carried out an attack like that in Britain," he declared, "it would be justified because Britain has carried out acts of terrorism in Iraq."

Moderate voices

At last, however, moderate Muslims have their fill and are beginning to speak out, urging their fellow Muslims to distance themselves from this bloody heritage. One of the voices expressing revulsion at the Beslan massacre was that of Abdel Rahman al-Rashad, the general manager of Al Arabiya television. He lamented the association of the name of Islam not only with the slaughter of school children but also with the murder of workers from Nepal, and the bombings of residences in Saudi Arabia and other places.

"The majority of those who manned the suicide bombings against buses, vehicles, school houses and other buildings all over the world," he wrote, "were Muslim. What a pathetic record! What an abominable achievement!"

Bater Wardam, a columnist in a Jordanian newspaper abjured the habit of always placing the blame elsewhere. "They are Arabs and Muslims who pray, fast, grow beards, demand the wearing of veils and call for the defense of Islamic causes," he said of the terrorists. "Therefore we must all raise our voices, disown them and oppose all these crimes."

Another commentator in a Saudi newspaper complained that the militants had "succeeded in the span of a few years in distorting the image of Islam."

Such critics, however, are scarce. In most Muslim countries, it takes considerable courage for moderate Muslims to speak out against the militants, for they do so at considerable risk to themselves.

"Islamist terrorism represents one of the most lethal threats to the stability of the civilized world," said Kamal Nawash, the Palestinian leading the Free Muslim Coalition Against Terrorism. "Democracy can not succeed unless terrorism is defeated and Islamic extremism is discredited."

Chechyna

Chechyna, is part of a largely Muslim region that was conquered by Russia in the 19th century. During World War II, Stalin exiled tens of thousands of Chechens and other peoples in the region to Siberia, believing them to be likely Nazi allies. Many died en route.

Most did not return home again until 1957, under Kruschev.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, several republics were granted independence. Not Chechnya. So it rebelled. Although Russia tried to suppress the Chechens with an iron fist, the military could not prevail and a peace accord was signed. This did not bring peace to Chechnya, however, as the country was plagued by warring factions and kidnappings. During the war both sides were accused of atrocities.

Under its elected president, the country devolved into ever greater violence, as radical Islamist groups became more active, launching a campaign of terror, attempting to spread their insurgency to neighboring territories.

In 1999 Russia again sent in troops, this time in greater numbers, trying to extinguish the rebels with brute force. Chechen rebels have kept fighting, especially in the mountains. They have often resorted to acts of terrorism, and the Russian military has repeatedly been accused of atrocities and corruption.

Russia has attempted to set up a government with limited autonomy for Chechnya. One president, elected with Russian support and rigged elections, was assassinated. Last summer, however, a new president was elected with 74 percent of the vote and an 85 percent turnout. But a radical Muslim leader, Shamil Basayev will not accept the status quo, nor will several other rival militant groups. Basayev seeks more than an independent Chechnya. He has stated on several occasions that he will be satisfied with nothing less than a Muslim fundamentalist state stretching from the Caspian to the Black Sea.

Ossetia is a small Christian enclave of 70,000 in this largely Muslim region.

There is also a separatist government in exile, whose "president" Alsan Maskhadov, is living in Britain. Most Chechens do not support the Beslan atrocities. Maskhadov said the terrorists are harming the cause of Chechen independence.

Fading Flowers, Holocausts and Russian Children

I see
a still life on the table
waiting to be painted
fading sunflowers
coppery autumn fruit
and letter addressed
in bold black handwriting

as I sit for a moment on the hearth
Elie Wiesel's book "Night"
in my hand

a live entity
smooth to my fingers
over the barb-wire drawing
grabbed me again
the poignancy of tortured consciences
amidst cruelty

that this story
could fade

that it could be
repeated
in Sudan
Iraq
Russia
thirsty terrified children
in Beslan
pawns
in a political power play
even yesterday

Linda Siebenga

News

Palestine... *cont. from p.1*

Maha Abdelrazak, Palestinian restauranteur

in Israel before the intifada, compared to 2,411 who do now, according to PECDAR, which was founded as the economic organ of the PA and is still the conduit for disbursing international donor funds. The salaries of those who worked in Israel brought up to $1 billion a year in remittances into the Palestinian economy.

Now the World Bank puts Palestinian unemployment at 28 percent – PECDAR says it's more than 50 percent. Per capita income, which in 2000 was about $2,000 a year for the West Bank and $1,600 for the Gaza Strip, has dropped to $950 and $650 respectively, PECDAR says. This year, for the first time, half of the Palestinian population will be considered to be living in poverty, according the World Bank's most recent study.

With fewer and fewer people working in the private sector, Dr. Shtayyeh estimates that about one-third of the Palestinian public is dependent on a PA salary. Tax collection – a key source of revenue for any government – was spotty to begin with and has plummeted since the intifada. The PA is able to function only through the help of donor funds.

It's not an encouraging trend. Ten years since the PA's founding, it is more dependent on foreign aid, but having a harder time getting it. For example, of the $650 million in aid the PA relies on to pay salaries this year, it has received only $140 million so far. "We are back to the scenario we had 10 years ago," Shtayyeh complains.

Now, in the course of a month, the PA needs $61 million to pay salaries and another $34 million in operating expenses, totaling $95 million. Of that, he says, $17 million comes from tax collection, and another $25 in the form of consumer and value-added taxes that Israel collects on goods coming into the country and then returns to the PA.

The difference has generally been made up by donor countries: about $10 million from the European countries and the rest from Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. Of $1 billion the PA received in 2003, 80 percent came from Arab countries. But the conflict with Israel, combined with Mr. Arafat's increasingly troubled image on the international stage, is making support to the Palestinians a more difficult sell to donors. While there have been years since the post-Oslo Accords when Japan gave $200 million to the Palestinian Authority, last year it only gave $16 million.

Less money from abroad

"There has been a sharp decline in donations, because of the closure and destruction," adds Shtayyeh. "Iraq has been hijacking the attention of other donors. The donors ask us, 'can you guarantee that the project we build will not be destroyed?' We cannot answer that."

But nor has the PA been able to answer to ongoing complaints of corruption and mismanagement. In a recent speech, Arafat acknowledged that his Authority had made mistakes and that reforms were necessary, but critics say he has not acted.

"The Palestinian Authority, to a large extent, has failed to manage the Palestinian economy as effectively and efficiently as it should have," says Dr. Nasser Abdelkarim, an economist at Bir Zeit University. "The Authority has never made available any development plan since its existence. We've only engaged in emergency planning and crisis management. The PA made mistakes by granting exclusive licenses for things like telecommunications – and in this they created an unfavorable environment for the expansion of growth in the private sector."

As he speaks in the lobby of another nearly empty hotel, this one in Ramallah, he notices a prominent former minister of Post and Communications, Imad Faluji, sitting behind him. "Let him hear it," Abdelkarim says loudly, referring to the complaints of corruption. "They're all part of what built this problem."

The Palestinian prime minister, Ahmed Qureia, threatened to resign this summer, protesting the growing state of "chaos" in the PA. Across the territories, tensions have been building. In Gaza in July, thuggish young renegades of Arafat's Fatah faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) abducted and beat his police chief, Ghazi Jabali, and continued to wreak havoc after Arafat appointed his nephew, who was widely rejected. Prominent Palestinian legislative council member Nabil Amr – a cabinet minister until last year – was shot in his own home in Ramallah, only an hour after he appeared in a television interview in which he was highly critical of Arafat. This strife, which largely has taken place inside Arafat's Fatah faction, is closely linked to the worsening financial squeeze, say some Palestinians and outside officials.

PA infighting

Since the World Bank and donor countries have put increasing pressure on the Palestinian leadership to institute a system of direct deposits, less donor money has been accessible to Fatah.

"Much of the tensions we're seeing are caused by financial stress," says a Western diplomat in Jerusalem.

Walid Masri remembers the first day he saw the Palestinian police stream through the dusty streets of Jericho, past the refugee camp where he spent his childhood. "When the Palestinian police first came, we felt a kind of safety and security. We could go out at night," he recalls.

Now, a decade later, he thinks of himself as someone who doesn't live under any government at all. "There is no functioning authority now. The Israelis come in and out when they want someone. Everything has come to a halt," says Mr. Masri, a waiter at the Mount of Temptation restaurant and tourist stop in Jericho. Masri, a father of five, has had almost no work since the intifada started. A place that once bustled with Christian pilgrims, the restaurant and gift shops only reopened a few months ago. It remains eerily empty, part of a minimall tucked into a hillside below the cable cars meant to carry visitors to the mount where Jesus was tempted.

Masri's boss, Maha Abdelrazak, says she and her husband opened up again after a four-year hiatus. But they only receive one or two buses a day, compared to the 30 to 50 they used to get at the height of the tourist season, pre-intifada.

"We wish we had saved some of the money from those days. But we just put everything we earned back into the restaurant and kept expanding. We never thought they would close the doors on tourists," says Mrs. Abdelrazak, a woman with an warm smile. The restaurant, even at lunch time in summer tourist season, has nary a customer. Only when a bus rolls in, she says, do they flick on the lights – turned off to save on energy bills.

The PA has not tried to collect taxes from them for at least four years, and there are not many services she can point to that she receives from the government. Yet she wishes everyone were a bit more patient. "People want magic to happen. People think that as soon as the PA is in place, all their problems should be solved," she says. "But no one's perfect. Ten years is not a long time for a country, for a government to give the people what they want."

Ilene R. Prusher is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor.

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Editorial

Identifying the enemy

Harry der Nederlanden

I love watching the televison show Canadian Idol. I didn't catch all the episodes, but watching these talented young people develop as singers and trying to guess which ones the public will choose is both entertaining and enlightening.

As the field of contestants narrowed, each singer gained his or her own group of supporters, determined to some extent by geography, but less so as the field grew smaller. By the time there were only three left, the fans were screaming and swooning over their choice. The singer becomes an object of fantasy and passion, a magnet of desire; he represents the dreams, the sense of limitless possibilities, harbored by almost all youth – and by some of us who remember our youth.

We assume the singer becomes an idol because of his talent, looks and some hard-to-define star quality; he has some innate qualities that attract us. But at the same time the singer, it seems to me, becomes infinitely more attractive just because he is the "Canadian idol" or one of the finalists on the show.

All of the top contenders were once more or less just one of the crowd in their respective schools and towns. Only after they appeared on television and made it to the select group, did they become the focus of attention back home. A few weeks earlier they could perhaps have put on a concert in their home town without drawing a crowd large enough to fill their garage. Now suddenly when they come home they draw a screaming crowd of several hundreds just to see them appear.

This is not just true of star-struck teenagers, says Oliver O'Donovan, it is true of all human beings at all times. We are drawn together by the things that attract our love and passion. And we learn to love the things, people and ideas that our community loves.

This is true on different levels – for fans of the Maple Leafs or the sport of hockey, for lovers of classical music or antique cars, for those passionate about saving the environment or stopping abortion, for those committed to a politics of protection for the poor or to spreading the ideas of Reformed Christianity. Each have their things and their stars, the symbols that unite them. People drawn to the same things are drawn to each other. They communicate this shared love and thereby form a community, and this community in turn engenders love for these good things in others, in the next generation, who also become part of that community.

Telling our stories

Writing and publishing stories is part of this process of affirming, sustaining and extending community. The mission statement of *Christian Courier* commits this paper to publishing those stories that promote a biblical worldview as understood by the Reformed tradition.

Some articles deal with ideas – theological, philosophical, ethical and political – more or less well thought out or just half formed. Some are half-baked, and they are turned over this way and that until they are well done or burnt to a crisp. Notions and strategies we consider contrary to Scripture are examined and criticised and rejected. Those we think are going to help us to live more faithful lives, to increase our understanding of God's world and to grow together in one mind, one commitment are repeatedly taken out, tried, applied, studied and polished up like the family silver. They are a rich inheritance, to be treasured, to be held up to the light and shared again and again.

In other articles members of our community share their experiences, their stories of struggle, hardship, laughter, insight and grace to confirm that the truths we cling to are not just words but vital realities. Some of these stories are very particular to *CC*'s Dutch immigrant community, even a bit parochial perhaps, but others are about the worldwide body of Christ, about the lives and sufferings of Christians in countries like Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Indonesia and China.

In every issue of *CC* we carry stories about persecution. Although we are well off, we are part of the church under the cross, and we are called to share the sufferings and help bear the burdens of our fellow believers. And even if we are the ones who write most of the books, there is much we can learn from Christians in those countries about what is fundamental.

It is good to tell those stories. It is necessary to the body of Christ, to build our sense of community.

Closing the circle

But it is not without its dangers. Many of the stories tell about persecution that comes at the hands of Muslims. These are reinforced by the stories we see on television and read in the dailies about Muslim terrorism directed against symbols of Western civilization.

These stories, too, intensify our sense of community. But not always in wholesome ways.

When we focus on stories about Christians around the world (in part because the mainstream media seldom carry these stories), are we conveying a sense that only fellow-believers matter, while others don't? Invariably, those stories of violence and persecution are told by those who are part of the suffering community, and they tend to gloss over the ethnic hatreds and crimes of their own and to magnify those of the other. In those distant Christian communities, we may assume that, as in ours, there are those who are Christian in name only and there are nasty, bone-headed Christians who do stupid things to incite conflict. That kind of complexity is seldom conveyed in our news stories.

How do we tell our stories without making the things, values and symbols that unite us supreme, and the community that this shared love creates a closed circle? How do we do the community-building things we need to do without circling the wagons and depicting those who do not share our loves as enemies to be feared and fought?

These are the concerns behind the front-page story on the school massacre in Beslan. The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) sometimes comes close to telling such stories wholly from the viewpoint of a closed community. Christendom – the Christian faith and the civilization that has sprung from that faith – are under attack by Islam. Some Muslims may be more radical and violent than others, but all of Islam is dedicated to the extinction of Christianity. They embody the forces of error and unbelief arrayed against those of truth and faith in these the latter days.

If we tell the story in this way, we create a sense of community, but it is a dangerous and faulty sense, one rooted in an Us-Them polarity.

To avoid this false antithesis, which ultimately leads to a crusade mentality, the mainstream media avoid depicting the terrorists as primarily representatives of any race or religion.

But we must not shrink back from the recognition that the vast majority of terrorist attacks come from the Islamic community and are motivated not primarily by poverty or anti-imperialism (decidedly Western notions) but by a desire to establish an Islamist empire by force, by terror if necessary. However, if we see the Muslim world as nothing more than a threat – as the Beast rising up out of the east to devour us, we play into the hands of the militant Islamists. They want to precipitate that sort of confrontation between good and evil, between black and white, for the radicals see the West as the Beast – the carrier of corruption, decadence and evil. And they can make a pretty good case. We don't present a very wholesome picture.

The Islamists are a threat to us, but they are an even greater threat to the vast majority of Muslims who want only peace and a better life for their children. We need also to reach out to those people and to their moderate leaders. We may not just brand them all as part of the Enemy. That is to grant too much power to the great Archenemy. He has no ultimate power to form community, to gather the flock. He has only the power to destroy.

God is still busy gathering in his people. We live in the *not yet*, and we must, therefore, not close the circle but defer that power to God. We must distinguish between those things we love in an ultimate sense and which constitute us as God's people and those things we love in a secondary sense, as part of our culture and civilization.

We may love individual freedom, democracy, equality for women, and many more things that distinguish Western culture from Islam, and we may even fight for them. Many thousands of our countrymen died fighting for democracy against the forces of fascism. Yet, many of the things we love were not part of Christendom at one time. Democracy, humane punishment for criminals, equality for women – things we find lacking in Islam – are as much treasures stolen from the Egyptians (the Enlightenment) as they are products of Christian culture.

We must know our enemy, and he is active in our own hearts and in our own (psuedo) Christian culture as well as in Islam. We must recognize Islam for what it is and militant Islam for what it is – a great danger. But if we identify too closely with our secondary loves – our culture and civilization – then the Enemy has triumphed over us.

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Letters

RE: The great Canadian debate: some similarities and many differences

Allow me to respond more officially to the letter from Mr. Vanderark of Christian Schools International printed in your edition of August 20, 2004. I know that in Canada the view is not that we have some differences and many similarities, as he asserted. Rather, we know that there are many differences and a few similarities with our American colleagues. What we do know for a fact, based on the last twenty years of organizational developments, is that there are major differences between Grand Rapids and almost any region in North America.

Mr. Vanderark does not deny this, but he points out that we have two things in common, namely, a commitment to Christian education and the same kingdom vision. And then he ends the letter with the 'sin' argument in order to clinch the whole debate. Let me respond to the 'sin' argument first, because it is symptomatic of an attitude we have found in some places in Grand Rapids.

Mr. Vanderark maintains that establishing separate Canadian organizations in church or school is wrong because it is an example of 'sinful kingdom building' by Canadians. So he is playing the good vs. evil view as the simple answer to very complex issues.

His argument assumes that breaking up a larger "international" organization is "sinful", whereas expanding American organizations around the globe is good and Christian. This view is pious nonsense. Ever since the Reformation, the idea of national churches has been normal around the globe. And ever since the French and American Revolutions, having national school systems is considered normal around the globe. So it is very puzzling to hear Mr. Vanderark come up with this unreformed viewpoint at this time in history.

The better and correct view is to assert that God is building His Kingdom around the globe using many national organizations to help. National and cultural differences are God ordained, as you can see in Acts 17:26. They certainly influence education tremendously.

That brings up the second faulty argument, namely that we share a common Kingdom vision. This is simply factually misleading as soon as you ask what exactly is meant by 'kingdom'.

In our Canadian schools we have on average some 25 denominations represented ranging from Pentecostal to traditional. While all supporters are committed to Christian education, very few would be able to define what a kingdom vision would be. In fact, they would be astounded to learn that they need one. Interestingly, the same is now also true in the CRCNA itself.

At Synod 2003, the assembly rejected a report on Christian schools because there is no longer any unanimity inside the CRC itself. In fact, I myself do not support the contents of the report, even though I am a loyal CRCer. So there are some issues here, which Mr. Vanderark may be seeing wrong because he is too focused in CRC loaded Grand Rapids.

So yes, we share a commitment to Christian schooling as an avenue of Kingdom service, but what that means in any town or city is an open question on both sides of the border.

So instead of coming up with the theological bypass arguments, I invite Mr. Vanderark to come up with the real arguments for steadfastly opposing to allow the Canadian schools to separate from Grand Rapids.

I look forward to seeing him provide solid economic, cultural, political, and educational arguments in favour of the single corporate headquarters – branch plant model now being espoused by our colleagues south of the border.

Incidentally, recent trips to the US have made it pretty clear that the border is here to stay. Two hours in a line up in hot weather can get anybody excited about national differences.

For the Board, Adrian Guldemond
Board Chair Christian Schools Canada

Re: "What unites us far exceeds our differences."

Dear Mr. Vander Ark,

It is amazing how quickly we become one sided. As an experienced educator you will admit that a border, any border, can be looked at from two sides. The national border, which you tend to diminish, between the USA and Canada can be looked at not only from your side of the border. If any country in the world is more concerned with its national borders than yours, please let me know.

Mr. Zondag, as principal of a local Christian school, simply expresses a wish to administer and care for Christian schools in a Canadian context, which he believes cannot be done as well in an international setting. I share his view. Mr. Vander Ark, why don't you? Why does Mr. Zondag's wish pose a threat to you apparently? Why did you not write a letter of strong encouragement to him? Could it be that you were only looking at the border from your own side, without granting others the same privilege from a different side?

To stress that there is a border between the kingdom of Christ and of the evil one does not eliminate or diminish our national identity and responsibility. Mr. Zondag, I am sure, fully agrees with your view to educate children to see that kind of border, because that border is clearly present in Canada and probably in the USA as well.

For your last sentence you owe Mr. Zondag an apology, I think. You accuse him of "sinful kingdom building", merely for expressing a wish to care for covenant children in a Canadian context. If you want us to remain together, then please change the tone and content of your future letters.

John G. Klomps, Mississauga

Thoughts on separation of the Canadian Churches from the U.S. part of the denomination

It is with a sense of disappointment that while we make exciting preparations for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church, an international denomination many of us call our spiritual mother, articles appear in the *Christian Courier* that call for a separation of the Canadian Churches from the U.S part of the denomination. Most of us have been a vibrant part of our church for over 50 years, while some of us have enjoyed this partnership for over 75 years.

Our churches on both sides of the border have benefited from U.S. pastors serving in Canada and Canadian pastors serving in the U.S. "The Banner," our denominational church magazine, has been served by three Canadian editors the last number of years, while the present executive director of the Ministries of the CRC also happens to be a Canadian. It is living proof that the national U.S/Canadian borders do not figure all that prominently in a church and kingdom that transcends human borders.

For the past 31 years, as executive director of the Canadian Christian Education Foundation (CCEF), an arm of Christian Schools International, formerly NUCS, it has been my privilege to be a vibrant part of this international organization which has served our Canadian schools from the beginning of its existence.

It would be impossible in this short letter to enumerate all the benefits we have enjoyed from this partnership during these three decades. They range from Christian textbooks and teacher manuals to support services like the funding, cost and shipping of "Christian Home and School," a magazine for parents, and the "Christian School Teacher," a magazine that is provided without cost to all Christian School teachers affiliated with CSI. Since 1973, both the Canadian and

U. S. foundations have underwritten the costs for these ventures; the U.S. foundation has paid 75% while the Canadian foundation has paid only 25% of these costs. In addition, our Canadian fund-raising arm has promoted the cause of Christian education by way of publications and inspirational Christian educational rallies from coast to coast, many of which were televised throughout our nation.

On the Canadian scene, we have also benefited from the work of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, district 10 of the CSI schools. This unique Canadian arm of CSI has been especially helpful with contacts with the local Canadian government in the battle for procuring funds for our Christian schools. The partnership of CSI and OACS has served our schools well in Ontario and should continue to be promoted. However, throughout the years we have always tried to prevent unnecessary duplication of services. For example, it is today with some concern that the parents of our Ontario Christian School children are charged sixty-one dollars per pupil to be members of the Ontario Alliance while its costs only ten dollars per pupil to be members of CSI.

But we are convinced that this imbalance will be corrected, not by radical surgery e.g. by a separation of the OACS from the CSI, but by a long standing mutual cooperation in a spirit of love and appreciation for what each organization has to offer to our Christian schools in North America and other parts of the world.

Fred R. VanderVelde
Burlington

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Letters

Canada Revenue no villain

A brouhaha and perhaps even a conspiracy was implied in the August 30, 2004 article on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and churches, which was directly taken from LifeSiteNews.com. In response allow me to offer clarification on the situation around charitable rules, advocacy, and where that leaves faith charities.

First of all, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada itself has clarified that their legal counsel Janet Epp Buckingham was not "called in" and "warned" about the political activity of churches. "In fact, Dr. Buckingham was invited to an informal consultation on the issues," according to EFC. At the meeting, concern was expressed about how to help churches understand what they were allowed and not allowed to do under CRA rules for charities, to which all charities are subject.

The LifeSiteNews article, in my view, severely misrepresents these CRA rules. This was not an "election time gag order on religions," nor were "churches [warned] to be silent during election or lose charitable status," neither was it a "Liberal ploy to silence their opposition." The article also mixes up two important principles in those rules, the difference between legitimate political activity and partisan political activity which charities may not undertake.

Charities are permitted to engage in political activity, using up to 10 percent of their charitable resources, to address legislation that is related to the organization's charitable purposes. There are specific interpretations of what "political" means, but there is room for advocating to government to change policies and laws. So a church which runs a food bank can advocate to government that it increase the minimum wage, for example. A church which believes same sex marriage is wrong could advocate that legal definitions not be changed. Helpful descriptions of the rules and examples of what is permitted can be found on the internet at www.cra?arc.gc.ca/tax/charities/policy/cps/cps?022?e.html .

What is strictly forbidden for any charity, religious or not, is to engage in partisan political activity; that is, it must not promote or oppose any particular political party or candidate for political office. If a charity does so it could be investigated and lose its charitable status. What makes this rule difficult and complicated is when only one party has a policy which the charity wishes to oppose or support. Controversial issues such as abortion, same-sex marriage, joining the war in Iraq, for example, are issues which could draw the attention of the CRA if charities deal with them in a partisan way during an election.

While the rules governing charities are not necessarily the best rules, nor always fully clear, it does not help matters to misrepresent them as they are, nor to characterize them as a "gag order on religion." Churches and other charities should know the rules and be involved politically to the extent they are permitted. Then they can join the movement to see the rules changed.

Sincerely, Harry Kits
Exec. Dir. Citizens for Public Justice

Harry Kits is right. I was sceptical of the article at first, but then I received it from other sources as well, sources I respected. It seems that they all basically passed on the same story uncritically, just as I ultimately did. Sorry for needlessly spreading paranoia.

Harry der Nederlanden

"Minds"

I was a bit depressed after reading Rev. Arie Leder's article on the various "minds" in the Christian Reformed Church, partly because the one I identify with the most, i.e. the "kuyperian mind," for one, had disappeared, and for two, was or had been "militant,"according to the story.

As I read the *National Post*, and the *Globe and Mail*, and then the Bible, I remembered what Dr. Runner (the mentor of Groen club at Calvin College in the 1960's) had said: "Don't read the Bible without the newspaper, and don't read the newspaper without the Bible," and so I read some stories of Jesus and I noticed that Jesus always talked about the Kingdom of God.

Yes, wasn't Kuyper the one who spoke a lot about church and Kingdom, and their relationship? Kuyper saw himself in the line of the Heidelberg Catechism, which calls us to be prophets, priests, and kings, in obedience to the chief prophet, only high priest and eternal King! Did Calvin Seminary, the school of the prophets, not want to address God's world with God's word?

Is that being antithetical and militant?

And so I pondered. I sat in church this morning, the local Christian Reformed Church, and still felt a little bit of a antithetical militant dinosaur of the past, but we sang P.H. 597 "The city is alive O God," and P.H. 611 "As stewards of a vineyard" sandwiched with a sermon on Christian labor – wow, my mind was actively back in the 21st century with a chorus of the same mind.

After several cups of coffee and minimal kletz, I started doubting again, and thought I'd check things out with some other church historian. I picked up H.Algra "Het Wonder van de 19 Eew" (The miracle of the 19th century). The opening summary (woord vooraf) was encouraging for all streams of reformed folk. "In the beginning of the 19th century it looked like reformed faith and life had disappeared from the Netherlands. Throughout the century there has appeared in different phases and forms a Reformed reveil (revival), mostly through the pushing forces (stuwende krachten) from the bottom up, through small folks (kleine luyden). There was no single name of lasting significance to whom to give an act of bravery, as reported in a report of a civil servant to his superior. The small pillars of strength (steunpunten) of these people, fellowships and groups, unclear and not that stable, eventually became free churches with growing responsibilities and increasing connectedness (samenbinding). Those free churches stimulated as in England a healthy democratic development in the national life." (Translation JR)

Thank you , Mr. Henry Algra, for helping me feel more connected. And Mr. Arie Leder, I know that you know better than to turn Christianity into churchianity, let's hear part three and part 4. With God's help and his gifts to the church of all ages, including the Christian Reformed Church, we/I can face the 21st century with the evangelical Kingdom mind of Christ.

Joe Reitsma, Bowmanville

Let's hear more

Thank you for your coverage of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches Assembly, "That All May Have Life in Fullness." I was especially pleased to see the pictures of the event, that highlight who the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is today: mostly citizens of countries from the Global South who are feeling the effects of economic exclusion. Some of that economic exclusion is a result of policies proposed, decided and enforced by institutions that are accountable to us in the Global North. I'm not a believer in "systems" critique either. "Systems" only work when individual people give their assent and approval (believe in them?).

So can we hear more of the real life stories, the theological reflection, and the economic analysis of the delegates and the church members they represent? Many of the delegates represented overseas development and mission partners of churches we attend.

Can we read more about the series of WARC consultations worldwide that prepared the way, conducted the research, and informed the view of the delegates to go so far as to name economic globalization an idolatry? Many Reformed churches appointed delegates to the WARC sponsored North America consultation on globalization earlier this year. What did they learn and how do they challenge us to be more true to our faith and calling?

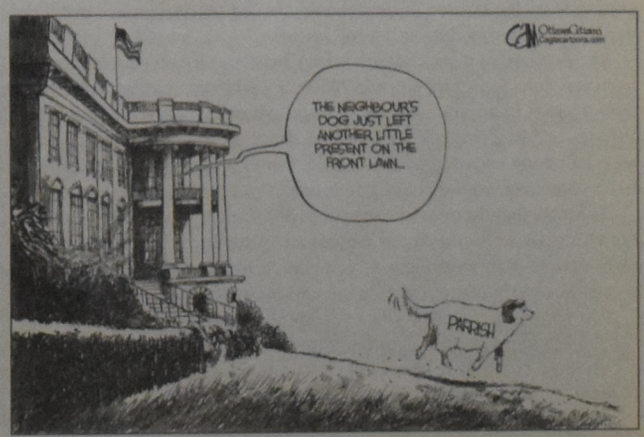
Before critiquing their work, let's try to understand more from fellow believers, especially when our governments are promoting the economic policies they've identified as destructive, and our own faith in them as being idolatrous.

Peter Noteboom
Toronto

Intelligence?

Please spare us the "intelligence" of Bert Hielema in his opinion column "Intelligence" (*CC* Aug.16,04). What I read sounded more like liberal left-wing wooly group-think – the very thing he tried to distinguish from intelligence in the opening few paragraphs of his column. He presents his review of Justin Franks' *Bush on the Couch* uncritically. After a number of highly inflammatory statements about President Bush: "megalomania, paranoia, false sense of omnipotence, unresolved love hate relationship with father..." Hielema jokes that "Time will tell", if this is a true picture. "Time wounds all heels," he adds. Ha, Ha! This is an "intelligent" assessment? I am surprised at how expertly Mr. Hielema imputes motives: "the Bush administration chose to invade Iraq because it provides a bridgehead into the richest oilfields in the world and pleased Israel." He fails to support that assessment with any "intelligence." He states, "The White House wanted to blackmail the leadership of the CIA to manufacture a case to attack Iraq." Any "intelligence" to support that scurrilous accusation? "Ariel Sharon, the Israeli P.M. has Bush in his pocket," he continues. He further states, "The President's real allies ... are Bible-thumping fundamentalists..." I could go on, I won't. Is this balanced, reasoned, informed opinion, or a rant? Our community deserves better.

Allan Romkema
Oakville



Reflections

A Summer of Prolific Mushrooms

you have to kneel
on both knees
elbows propped on the damp earth
to photograph these fungi
in all their varied magnificence

tweak blades of grass
to reveal stems and gills
beneath umbrella shields
baseball smooth
mottled
or tent-shaped

feathery parabola morels
or amanitas
with rings on their stems
from detached veils

gills in black or tan
deadly or not
dropping spores
to the moist ground
to set in motion again
this breaking-up process
of changing organic matter
into humus

Some Green Created Spot

Just do it.
Step outside.
Drive if you have to
to some green created spot.

There's a sanctuary of bush
against our backyard
where wild undergrowth
springs up each year
to fill the spaces between the willows
saskatoons, poplars and spruce.

Cow parsnips acquire inches each day
their broad elephant leaves
bamboo stems
beneath a delightful doily
of crocheted flowers to flatter
bush and roadsides.

Rain drops perch
glimmer
on the leaves.

A soft wind
sprinkles them on my head
baptizes me with the presence
of Father, Son and Spirit
there so ever evident.

Things Formerly Unseen

taste blindness
on a mellow summer evening
hands held out to sense
the branches beside the path
feel the moth-soft darkness
touch your face
on this moonless night

let there be
he said
light

a hint of dawn
first created thing
creeps in over the land
before the full face of the sun
bursts over the horizon

what is this light
that gives our eyes reason to be
fills the scope of where we live
with its invisible presence

bends over horizons
in moments of mirage
so that vision stretches
to things formerly unseen

Linda Siebenga

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Sifting and sorting: a natural developmental process?

As a young monk I watched many friends suddenly begin to question their vocation and eventually decide to leave. But for years I felt secure in my choice. The change came late and unexpectedly.... Thomas Moore, *The Soul's Religion: Cultivating a Profoundly Spiritual Way of Life*

I had a reality check the other day about the importance of encouraging others to explore their own spiritual or faith journey. I also had a reality check about the amount of anxiety people carry around with them when they struggle with what they have been taught in childhood. And I had a reality check about our lack of awareness that this struggle is a normal part of our spiritual development and does not need to be feared. All of this came out of a casual conversation with a gentleman in his mid-forties who was extremely uncomfortable with his unexpected internal conflicts.

New paths in midlife

His comments brought to mind the faith stories I recently read in a popular secular magazine. The title of the article was "Finding a new path: the power of discovering true faith in midlife." Of course, we could question the word "true" in this respect but the writer means the word as being "true" for the person who is discovering the particular faith. For instance, there was a 59-year-old who was raised a Christian Scientist and became a devout Muslim. Then there was a 50-year-old who had an eclectic religious upbringing, which included an Episcopal church, but had converted to Catholicism. There was also a 54-year-old who attended black Baptist church services when young but converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Last, there was a 43-year-old who attended a conservative Baptist church in childhood but became a member of a charismatic Episcopal church and is now heavily involved in the Alpha program.

External vs. internal

Before midlife we are often occupied with our prescribed societal roles of making a living, building a career and raising a family. At that time we are also more concerned with what others think of us and readily fall in with what our subculture or our society at large expects of us. On the other side of the coin, there are those of us who take the opposite route and adamantly refuse to fulfill these prescribed roles and consequently "drop out" of what is expected. In either case, the demands and expectations of the external environment profoundly influence our thoughts and behaviors.

When we move towards midlife we become more internal. The illusions we had about life are stripped away and so we become more reflective. We begin to have a better understanding of the complexities of life and are no longer happy with simple answers. There are exceptions, of course. Some of us are quite content with how "the faith of our youth" has developed within us over time and experience very little upheaval.

Permission to sift and sort?

Still, it is important to realize evaluating our faith at midlife is part of our normal developmental process. For some of us, however, it can be a difficult and anxious time. Especially, if we have come from a home environment that discouraged asking challenging questions about our beliefs. The main problem, however, in questioning our Christian faith (as mentioned before in one of my columns) is that the church is often experienced as an instructive institution that doles out explanatory directives regarding the word of God. Wavering from the status quo, even for a moment in time, leaves us open to possibly losing out on eternal life. Yes, there are absolutes in our faith, but much of scripture is ambiguous. Unfortunately, we do not do well with ambiguous concepts. We prefer our faith to be crisp and clear.

We also tend to gloss over difficult questions. A recent example is the meditations for May 2004 published in *The Banner*. Here Rev. Victor Ko "effectively" explains why we no longer have to struggle with or be tongue-tied about Jesus' complaint from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He believes through understanding the remez technique of teaching, we hear Jesus really saying "My God has not forsaken me!" I wonder if my new friend would appreciate this explanation.

The point is that we need to give ourselves permission to re-evaluate our faith if we are struggling. A real blessing can be a supportive friend or a group of people who also enjoy dialoguing about these matters. And it would be helpful if there could be one person who knows more about the issues we are struggling with than we do ourselves. It may take a while to sort things out but if we are patient and willing to work at it, we will come to a more peaceful place.

Arlene Van Hove is now on sabbatical from Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Serbia's Orthodox bishops appeal to UN on Kosovo

Clive Leviev-Sawyer

Sofia, Bulgaria (ENI) – Serbia's Orthodox church has appealed to the international community to help the return of people expelled from Kosovo because of the 1999 conflict and to provide urgent assistance for the restoration of churches destroyed in the fighting.

"The church expects and hopes that the UN and the EU live up to their historical responsibility and undertaken commitments for the renewal and protection of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija, which is undoubtedly of global significance," the church's bishops said in a message after a three-day meeting last week.

Kosovo is officially a province of Serbia and Montenegro, but it has been run by a UN mission and NATO peacekeepers after an air campaign by NATO in 1999 pushed back Serb forces which had been cracking down on independence-seeking ethnic Albanians.

But the NATO-led peacekeeping force faced criticism for a slow reaction in March this year when the majority Albanian population turned on the Serbian minority, leaving 19 dead, hundreds of homes burned and ransacked, and more than 4000 Serbs displaced.

Kosovo's ombudsman, Marek Antoni Nowicki said the situation in the southeastern part of the province was so drastic it was driving Serbs out of the province into Serbia.

The Orthodox bishops said a plan by the Serbian government for the decentralisation and self-government by the various communities in the province was "the only realistic prerequisite for the preservation of the multi-ethnicity of Kosovo and protection of human rights."

Jesus day: 40,000 Christians march through Berlin

Wolfgang Polzer

BERLIN (ANS) — On the third anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks more than 40,000 Christians marched through the German capital of Berlin singing and praying. They took part in a Jesus Day organized by evangelical Christians, mainly from charismatic and Pentecostal backgrounds.

The march started and ended at the Brandenburg gate. On their way through the city participants stopped at six political, financial, commercial and cultural centres to offer prayers. Near the US embassy they not only prayed for the 3,000 victims of the 9/11 attacks, but also for those killed in other acts of terrorism, such as the school siege in Beslan, South Russia.

The Jesus Day is an antidote against terrorism, violence and separation, said Rev. Axel Nehlsen, chairman of the organizing committee. 500 participants also took part in a rally of solidarity with Israel and Messianic Jews. They voiced their concern over the escalating anti-Semitism in Europe.

Participants also took part in 50 evangelistic and social projects during the Jesus Day. The first Jesus Day took place in the year 2000 with approximately 50,000 participants.

Wolfgang Polzer is senior news editor of the Evangelical News Agency idea, Wetzlar, Germany.

America's "intoxication with power" makes it unloved, says Lutheran leader

Peter Kenny

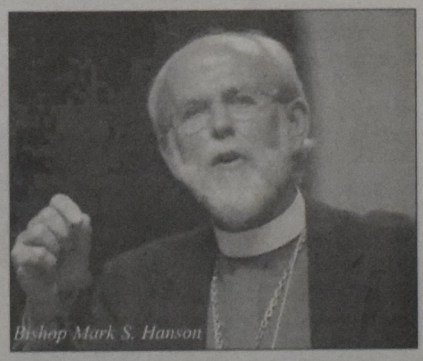
Geneva (ENI) – Most citizens of the United States want to be known as generous, peace-loving people, who cherish freedom and are committed to democracy; yet that is not how they are seen through the eyes of the world, the global leader of millions of Lutherans said, speaking at the yearly meeting of the main governing body of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), held September 1- 7 in Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva.

Bishop Mark S. Hanson, an American who is the president of the LWF, a grouping of churches representing more than 60 million Lutherans worldwide, said he had learned from his travels that unfortunately the United States was "viewed as a nation intoxicated with power."

"As a religious leader I feel compelled to speak about our nation," said Hanson in his speech to the LWF Council, noting he was "mindful of the global economic and military domination today of the United States."

"We are seen as preoccupied with the expansion of our globalised economy rather than as standing in solidarity with those in poverty," said Hanson.

"We are judged as acting not with humility but with arrogance by refusing to sign the Kyoto Accords [on the emission of gases], disregarding the Geneva Conventions and resisting being part of the United Nations coordinated HIV/AIDS program," he said.



Bishop Mark S. Hanson

In view of the current election campaign in the United States, Hanson was asked by a journalist for his views on President George W. Bush, citing criticism the bishop had delivered against the US administration, in particular relating to the war in Iraq.

"I don't endorse a particular candidate and I won't do," said Hanson but he added that he felt compelled to criticise any party that did not care about the consequences of the impact of globalization. Hanson said he was aware most church members were much more politically conservative than he was.

He called on the Lutheran federation to join those in the US and throughout the world "who call for repentance and transformation where the United States fails, and let us also acknowledge with gratitude the work it does when and where it serves all of humanity."

Taliban militants target converts to Christianity

LOS ANGELES (Compass) — Five Afghan men who had converted to Christianity have been killed in separate incidents since late June near the borders of eastern Afghanistan.

The first death was reported on July 1 by Reuters, which received a telephone call from a Taliban spokesman announcing the murder of Mullah Assad Ullah the previous day in Ghazni province. "A group of Taliban dragged out Mullah Assad Ullah and slit his throat with a knife because he was propagating Christianity," the man told Reuters. The murder of another Christian convert who had gone to visit Assad Ullah's family was confirmed on August 7. The body of Naveed ul-Rehman was discovered in early August near his abandoned car in Awdand. Three more Afghan Christians were stabbed or beaten to death in separate incidents on July 15, July 23 and July 28. Each left behind a wife and several children.

Church leaders in Africa warn of land conflict after Kenya dispute

Fredrick Nzwili

Kenyan wood carving

Nairobi (ENI) – Uneven land distribution will cause serious unrest if land reform fails to target the poor, the World Council of Churches general secretary, Rev. Samuel Kobia has warned in his home country of Kenya.

"In Africa the issue of land has not been satisfactorily dealt with," Kobia told journalists in Nairobi after a three-day international church conference which ended September 4. "It is usually the richer who benefit from land reforms in Africa." Kobia said until governments demonstrated that the landless poor benefited from reforms, land would continue to cause tensions among communities.

Conflicts over land reform have been most prominent in Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe has encouraged forced redistribution of the land as a way of correcting what is said to be unjust land ownership massively in favor of white farmers.

The Rev. Mvume Dandala, general secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches, which hosted the interchurch meeting, cited Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, where he said pre-colonial land treaties had been responsible for a large number of Africans being without land.

Dandala told ENI that Africa needed to find a final solution to unjust distribution of land. He said, "I think this is an unfinished task in the continent."

The Catholic Information Service reported Dandala saying: "The case of Zimbabwe where 80 per cent of the land was owned by whites was pathetic, but physically chasing them out by the government is not the solution, while the case of Kenya where the government refuses to give its citizens a hearing is no better."

Members of the pastoralist Maasai tribe have marched onto large ranches once owned only by white settlers in Kenya's lush Rift Valley and have claimed the tracts as their own ancestral land. The Laikipia district, where the invasions have occurred, is now mainly held by Kenyan small-scale farmers, although there are some commercial farms, owned by Kenyans, both black and white, as well as by some Europeans.

Kenyan police officers in riot gear have stopped the transgressors who have gone onto the land with their cattle.

The controversy started at the 100th anniversary of a 99 year lease agreement reached between British colonialists and a Maasai traditional chief, called Lenana, in 1904.

"The government should dialogue with the Maasai and stop using excessive force," Roman Catholic Bishop Cornelius Korir told the Daily Nation newspaper.

The Maasai have said they want their land returned or compensation of 10 billion Kenya shillings (US$120 million) from the British government.

Church

Dutch Reformed push up Lutheran federation numbers by 2 million

Stephen Brown

Geneva (ENI) – The total membership of the world's biggest grouping of Lutherans has jumped by more than 2.5 million to nearly 65 million after three new churches were accepted into membership, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) announced.

But most of this increase for the Geneva-based LWF comes because of church members from a Reformed (Calvinist) background rather than the tradition founded by Martin Luther.

"This is another indication of the changing ecumenical landscape in the world to deepen the unity in Christ," Bishop Mark Hanson, the president of the LWF, said about the development. "I think it is marvellous."

One of the new church members was the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, formally established in May 2004 as a union of two Reformed churches with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The two Reformed churches had a combined membership of about 2.5 million while the Lutheran church, a founding member of the LWF in 1947, had only 14,976 members.

The other two churches accepted into membership of the LWF September 6 during a meeting of the grouping's council, were the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in the Czech Republic, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana.

The 123,633-member Czech church has since 1918 also brought together Reformed and Lutheran traditions, and has its origin in two streams of the Reformation – the movement led by the early 15th-century Bohemian reformer Jan Hus, and the "Moravian" movement which traces its roots back to 1457.

LWF general secretary Ishmael Noko said he hoped for "a global common agreement for full communion" between Lutherans and Reformed, as already exists in Europe and some other parts of the world.

The 26,000 member-Ghanaian church was established in the West African country in 1958 by missionaries from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and was formally registered in 1964.

The new members increase the number of member churches to 138 churches in 77 countries. Membership increased to almost 65 million.

10th LWF Assembly was held in Winnipeg this year

God is near, even when he is silent

A meditation on Isaiah 42:10-17 by Pope John Paul II

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) – Some scholars attribute the vigorous hymn of joy and victory to the so-called Second Isaiah, a prophet who lived in the sixth century B.C., at the time of the return of the Israelites from their exile in Babylon. The hymn begins with a call to "sing to the Lord a new song" (Isaiah 42:10), just as in other Psalms.

The "newness" of the song, which the prophet asks for is certainly the opening of a horizon of liberty – a radical change in the history of a people who have known oppression and sojourn in a foreign land (Psalm 136).

The new in the Bible often has the tone of a perfect and definitive reality. It is almost the sign of the beginning of an era of salvific fullness that seals the suffering history of humanity. The song of Isaiah is characterized by this high tone, well adapted to Christian prayer.

The world in its totality, which includes the earth, sea, islands, deserts and cities, is invited to raise a "new song" to the Lord (Isa 42:10-12). The whole of space is involved to its furthest horizontal confines, which even include the unknown, as well as its vertical dimension, which starts from the desert plane, where the nomad tribes of Kedar are found (Isa 21:16-17), and rises to the mountains. The city of Sela is found there, identified by many with Petra in the territory of the Edomites, a city placed among rocky peaks.

All the inhabitants of the earth are invited to form an immense choir to acclaim the Lord with exultation and give him glory.

After the solemn invitation to sing (vss 10-12), the prophet has the Lord enter the scene, as the God of the Exodus who has liberated his people from the slavery of Egypt: "The Lord goes forth like a hero, like a warrior" (vs 13). He sows terror among his adversaries, who oppress others and commit injustice.

The song of Moses also depicts the Lord during the crossing of the Red Sea as a "mighty man of war," ready to extend his powerful right hand and terrify the enemies (Exodus 15:3-8). With the return of the Israelites from the deportation to Babylon, a new exodus is about to take place and the faithful must be conscious of the fact that history is not left up to fate, to chaos or to oppressive powers: the last word is with the just and strong God, the Psalmist already sang: "Give us aid against the foe; worthless is human help" (Psalm 59:13).

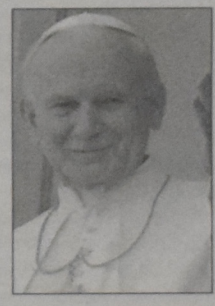
Having entered the scene, the Lord speaks, and his vehement words (Isa 42:14-16) are a mix of judgment and salvation. He begins by recalling that "For a long time I have held my peace," that is, he did not intervene.

The divine silence is often the cause of perplexity and even of scandal for the just, as Job's long cry attests (see Job 3:1-26). However, this is not a silence that indicates absence, almost as if the Lord leaves history in the hands of the wicked, while he remains indifferent and unmoved. In reality, that silence ends in a reaction similar to that of a woman in travail who pants, puffs and cries. It is the divine judgment on evil, represented by images of aridity, destruction, desert, but it has a vital and fruitful result.

In fact, the Lord makes a new world arise, an era of liberty and salvation. The eyes of those who were blind are opened, so that they can enjoy the bright light. The way becomes easy, and hope flowers, making it possible to continue to trust in God and in his future of peace and happiness.

Every day the believer must know how to discern the signs of divine action, even when it is hidden by the apparently monotonous and pointless flow of time. As an esteemed modern Christian author wrote, "the earth is pervaded by a cosmic ecstasy: There is in it an eternal reality and presence that, however, normally is asleep under the veil of custom. The eternal reality must now reveal itself, as in an epiphany of God, through all of that which exists" (R. Guardini, *Wisdom of the Psalms*, Brescia, 1976, p. 52).

To discover, with the eyes of faith, this divine presence in space and time, but also in ourselves, is the source of hope and trust, even when our heart is troubled and shaken "as the trees of the forest tremble in the wind" (Isa. 7:2). In fact, the Lord appears on the scene to rule and judge: "To govern the world with justice and the peoples with faithfulness" (Psalm 96:13).



[Translation by ZENIT]

General Secretary of World Alliance of Reformed Churches calls for closer cooperation with Lutherans

GENEVA (LWI) – The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) General Secretary, Rev Dr Setri Nyomi has expressed hope that the Council of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) would take further action on recommendations of the Lutheran-Reformed Joint Working Group.

"I hope as soon as it is workable, different levels of our governing bodies will be able to meet together in the near future," Nyomi stated in his message to the LWF Council at its meeting in Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva.

The newly elected WARC Executive Committee, Nyomi informed the LWF Council, would be taking similar actions at its first meeting in 2005.

The WARC general secretary said the challenges facing Christian world communions and ecumenical organizations call for careful prioritizing. Referring to the theme of this year's Council meeting, "Growing Together, Growing Apart," Nyomi hoped some of those decisions would not be limited only to growing together within the Lutheran family, but would also give clear signals of growing together within the Reformation family.

The Lutheran-Reformed Joint Working Group completed its work in 2001. Its report "Called to Common Communion and Common Witness," was published in 2002 and presented to the LWF Council the same year. The Council approved the group's recommendation calling for the establishment of a Joint Lutheran-Reformed Commission that would, among other things, be responsible for a study project on structures of church communion, reflecting on the diversity and complementarity of ecclesiological approaches within the two confessional families as they move toward new forms of communion.

The LWF and WARC secretariats have held Joint Staff Meetings at intervals for some time, by which cooperation is monitored and promoted. The two organizations participate in several of each other's study programs.

The WARC brings together more than 200 Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed and United churches comprising over 75 million Christians in over 100 countries around the world. WARC is a fellowship with roots in the sixteenth century Reformation led by John Calvin, John Knox and Ulrich Zwingli among others, and the earlier reforming movements of Jan Hus and Peter Valdes.

Christian living

Consumerism: a subtle corroder of virtue

UNIONTOWN, Ohio (Zenit.org) – Jesus Christ spoke out against greed more than any other vice. But despite those warnings, Christians are still incredibly susceptible to the allure of a materialistic lifestyle, says a Christian psychologist.

Dr. Ray Guarendi, author, radio host and father of 10, told ZENIT that Christians in the West are plagued by consumerism and described how greed damages Christian marriages, families and individuals.

Q: Those in a free society are awash in choice in virtually all aspects of life: housing, employment, appearance, relationships, possessions. What would you say are the major areas where consumerism has deeply affected Christians' behavior – without them realizing it?

Guarendi: Consumerism seems to me to be the number one corporate sin of Christians – it's the sin that affects the most of us the most. We are simply so deep into it we don't see it anymore.

Our desire for stuff supersedes everything. We are distracted, owned, tempted and seduced by it. We simply think less of God and more of "it" – it consumes more of our waking moments than God. That may be why our Lord spoke more of greed in the New Testament than anything else.

Part of the problem is that our culture views consumerism and stuff as part and parcel of normal living. It just is; it's how people get by. How can that be wrong? But it goes to the core of who we are. Consumerism equates with self – self-centeredness, self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction, selfish desires.

Virtually everyone lives to the limit or above what they can afford. That leaves no margin to give of money, to give of time and to simply have extra. Often, when missionaries come into churches and take a second collection, the number of $1 bills is pathetic.

Unfortunately, we don't see it because we're like fish that don't sense the water around us. We need to make an effort to sense consumerism and try to resist it in our society.

When kids go anywhere – the store, restaurants, parties, other homes, even churches – they get prizes. We get stuff as often as we breathe; it becomes part of our lifestyle. We have to consciously and willfully fight to recognize that this is happening.

If we gave to the church the amount of money we spend eating out and shopping – or how much we pay on interest for things we don't really need – the church would be able to help so many more people.

In our culture, being a consumer is seen as the good life – but it distracts us from the infinitely good life. Adam and Eve had everything, except for one tree. And of course, that's what they wanted the most.

Q: With the growth of consumerism, how have you seen this phenomenon play out in Christian marriages, families and children?

Guarendi: As a therapist, one of the first things I do with a child who has a behavior problem is ask the parents to reassess the child's goodies, activities and privileges. Kids are awash in things and leisure opportunities, and it affects their behavior.

One of the top three stresses in marriages and families is finances. We are the wealthiest culture the world has ever seen, but our discontent over our finances, homes and ability to buy things is sky-high.

Because of the degree we want stuff, we have to work. That means that Daddy and sometimes Mommy are away from home all day so that they and their kids can have everything they want. This leads to what I call the "working parent compensation system."

Moms often don't want to work, but think they have to work because of spending habits in the family. They are tired when they come home, they feel guilty about not spending enough time with their children and they are hesitant to spend that little time punishing their kids for misbehaving.

That affects their resolve to discipline and be, in effect, parents. If parents are working long or extra hours, they can't supervise their children; their kids are on their own to raise themselves.

Husbands often pursue their toys more than wives because they are told they gotta have them to be a man's man and enjoy life. At a superficial level, guys want the newest, best stuff, and sometimes that includes wives. They think, "My wife is getting older; there must be a better, newer model out there."

When you learn to want things, your wants don't just stop at inanimate objects. You want other people and relationships that seem better than your current ones. When you are dissatisfied with what you have, it doesn't stop with consumer goods. This often leads to affairs and an overall pattern of discontent.

Discontent is not related to what we have, it's the distance between what we have and what we want.

Q: How can Christians gauge how much consumerism influences their lives? What are questions that people, and especially parents, can ask themselves in order to determine its pervasiveness?

Guarendi: Here are some things you can ask yourself.

If I am asked to give to the work of the church, can I do it? How many things do I need? People often think they can't give to the church because they have too much stuff to buy, too many payments; they don't have extra to give.

How much margin is there in my life? Do I have free time? Do I have free money? Free energy? I'm too busy to do anything for anyone? Look at busyness and look how much is necessary.

You have to look at what demands your time and if you can justify it. Even if you can afford things, you don't have to have them. Look how much you use things, especially your toys and big things. Ask yourself: Am I neglecting others in order to take care of all my stuff? What kind of time do I spend with my kids and family?

If you own a big home, even if you can pay for it, maintaining it eats up a lot of your time.

How much stuff do my kids have? Kids need about five toys, if that. They can draw, read and make up things. I use as a rule of thumb: Get rid of 90% of what kids have. It improves your frustration level with them, and it improves their gratitude and behavior. Give it away. I am not saying live like St. Francis; just get down to a healthy level.

Q: How can Christians respond to and combat consumerism?

Guarendi: Very simple way to deal with it: give it away or don't buy it. Go through your house; count all of the things that are just sitting there. They serve no purpose but to adorn our lives.

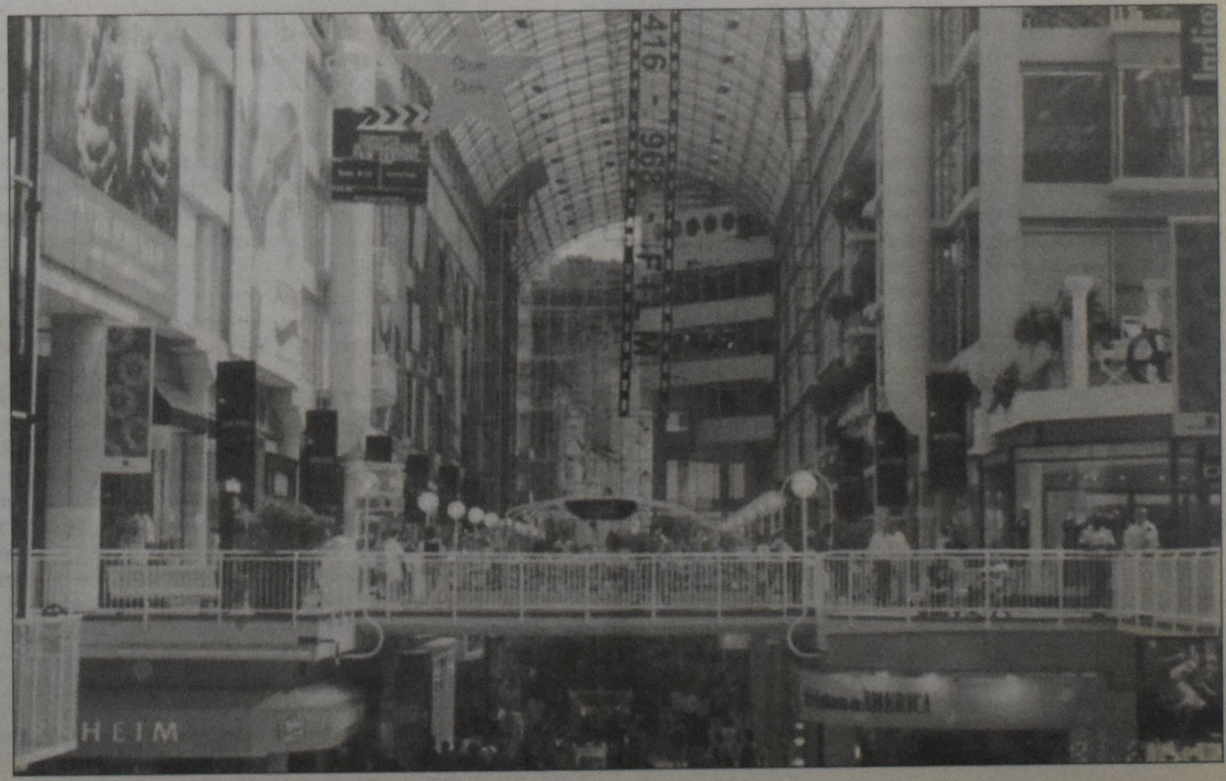
Look at how you spend your money. If someone is hurting and needs your help, are you contributing only $5 to help them? Why aren't you giving them more?

Consumerism does not help in the life of virtue. It is a subtle corroder of Christian virtue. It is devastating to a Christian's walk with the Lord because it flows in tandem with preoccupation with self.

Consumerism is a continuation of self-absorption – life is to get, not to give. Materialism is completely antithetical to Christian living and the giving of ourselves, our belongings and our lives.

We need to look at ourselves, our homes and how we live with an objective eye. Look at what is helping you get to heaven, and what is keeping you from walking with God.

The Eatons Centre in Toronto



Christian living

I won`t go with you.

Abandonment as an act of love

Jon Dykstra

"You're kicking someone out of your church?"

It can be hard bringing a friend to church for the first time, but it gets harder still when that friend is brought the same Sunday an excommunication notice is read out. Excommunication is almost impossible to explain because so few churches do it. It is practically unknown to people outside Reformed or Catholic circles, and on the surface it seems so harsh and uncaring. It seems mean.

The biblical basis is clear enough, Matthew 18:15-18 speaks of excluding an unrepentant sinner from the communion of the Church: "Let him be to you as a heathen and a tax collector." 2 Thessalonians 3:14 even gives a clear reason for this exclusion: "do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed."

But the biblical explanation isn't very satisfying. Yes, that's what it says, but can that be what it really means? It doesn't seem to make sense. Wouldn't it be better if this sinning brother kept coming to church, and kept hanging out with his Christian friends? How can God's word act on his soul if we prevent him from even hearing it?

This is the sort of thinking that has eliminated excommunication in most churches, and delayed and lengthened the process in others. There is always the hope that as long as the sinning brother keeps attending, something might change. This hope for change seems to disappear once they have been excommunicated, and so the process is dragged out as long as possible.

The pro-life explanation

I never fully understood the rationale behind excommunication until a Lutheran, in my university pro-life group, explained it to me. She didn't talk about excommunication though. Instead she talked about abandonment as an act of love. Our group was discussing what one of our members had gone through when her friend asked her to go with her to an abortion clinic.

"What could I do? She's my best friend, and she was going crazy. She needed me so I went with her."

"Did she know you were pro-life?"

"I told her."

"She knew you were pro-life and she still asked you to help her get an abortion? Does she know what being pro-life means? Does she know you think abortion is murder?"

"She needed me so she asked me. We're best friends!"

"Your friend asked you to help her murder her baby. Do you think she really understood what she was asking you to do? If she had really understood, do you think she would have asked you?"

"But she did ask…what else could I do?"

"You could have said no. You could have said, 'You know I love you, you know we are best friends, but what you are doing is wrong, and I cannot help you do it. You know I would do anything for you, but I will not do this. If you are going to do this, you will have to do it alone.' That would have given your friend – the friend who knows you love her dearly – something to think about. If you go with her, she'll never understand how serious abortion is. After all, her pro-life friend went with her. But if you refuse to help her, if her best friend abandons her, then she might just be shocked into realizing just how serious this is. Abandoning her gives her more to think about than accompanying her ever could."

An unrepentant sinner is often an ignorant sinner. He doesn't see the need to repent and doesn't think his particular sin is a big deal. That thought is confirmed when the church refuses to discipline him. There is no sharp break to snap the sinning brother back to his senses. Instead he'll probably start attending less and less frequently, and start making more and more friends outside the church. Finally discipline becomes impossible because the man no longer has any friends left in the church. Excommunication at this point is incapable of shaming him, because he doesn't care what the people in the church think.

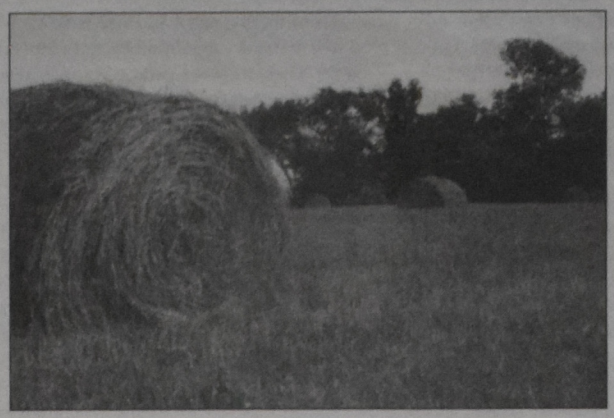
But if we act while the church is still the focal point in his life, then the unrepentant brother will see the people he loves, and the people who love him, telling him they will not walk down the wide path with him. Then the brother will be left alone with his thoughts, left alone to evaluate his path. And Lord willing he will then be forced to see the error of his ways.

Excommunication does make sense, and we should thank God for it.

Just a hayseed at heart

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke



It's interesting how people love to stereotype. For instance, the way urban dwellers and rural folk view one another as city slickers and country bumpkins. Since we're farmers, our 18-year-old daughter refers to us as a bunch of "hicks." She used to say that with a bit of a sneer in her voice, but lately I've noticed she's succumbing to the inevitable. Not only does she take pleasure in filling up her friends' crowded city driveways with our pick-up truck, but she proudly bought two tiny cowboy hats to dangle from the rear-view mirror. There's hope for her yet, even though she currently lives in the city to attend school.

Some years ago our son, James, invited a friend from the city to stay overnight on our farm. When I drove him home, he asked, "So what do you do for fun out here in the sticks?" I informed him that we often pitch cow-paddies to wile away summer evenings, and when our teens get really bored, they've been known to form gangs and go cow-tipping. His eyes widened at that one, but he didn't have the nerve to ask for all the details.

Maybe the truth is stranger than fiction. The latest trend around here, and I kid you not, is the annual Big Bale Display Contest. Many of our neighbors go to great lengths and considerable expense to arrange huge round bales of straw into super-sized advertisements for the fall fair in town. This makes for front page news in the local paper, which, I admit, is a welcome relief from the usual Women's Institute report. One year the fellow down the road built a model Ferris wheel entirely out of straw bales and twine. You have to admire that kind of ingenuity.

In our town the fall fair is the big event, but a lot of rural towns have come up with their own special festivals to amuse their civic minded citizens and draw in a few extra dollars. There's the Applefest, Pumpkinfest, and Paddyfest (no cattle involved), just to name a few. And what's a fair or a festival without some kind of beauty pageant? Our young women may aspire to become the local Queen of the Furrow, Dairy Princess, or for the more politically correct, the Fall Fair Ambassador.

Close knit communities may have their drawbacks. (Try to keep a secret out here.) But there are many advantages to country living as well. I grew up in a small town, and a couple of incidents stand out in my memory to attest to the character of small town people. One time we were about to leave for a visit to Germany when my mother received word that her mother had suddenly died. The same afternoon, the lady who owned the dress shop in town showed up at our door with a complete wardrobe of blouses, skirts, and dresses all in black, in my mother's size. She took the new garments which my mother had previously purchased from her in exchange, even though the mourning clothes were more expensively priced.

Another time, when I was a teenager, I was in the drugstore on a Saturday afternoon. A couple of strangers came in, all dressed up for a wedding. They needed film for their camera, but the store didn't carry that particular type. So the lady behind the counter told them to wait while she went upstairs to her apartment for a moment. She returned with her own camera, loaned it to the strangers and sold them a film to put in it. She then requested they fill up their film and return the camera to the brides' parents at the end of the evening. "Just tell them it belongs to Gloria at the drugstore," she said.

Granted, that was many years ago, but I don't think things have changed much. Around here everybody still knows everybody else's business, hardly anybody locks their doors, and from time to time some city slicker will send a letter to the editor to tell an extraordinary tale of neighborly kindness they experienced while passing through the area. And even though we have a brand new Tim Horton's of our own, there are enough Good Ol' Boys congregating there daily to provide Hugh Cook with another whole book of Alfalfa stories.

This year's theme for the fall fair is "Where Memories are Made." I may or may not attend, depending on the weather. But I have to agree, the people who live in small towns and the countryside surrounding them are the source of a lot of good memories for me. Guess I've always been a hayseed at heart. The other day I parked at the grocery store, got out of the car and did a double take at the guy in the truck beside me. He was a real old goat. No, I'm not being disrespectful. He was a billy goat…horns, goatee, and all, grinning back at me from the driver's seat.

You just don't see stuff like that in the major centres. City slickers hardly ever let their livestock drive.

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The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven: your will be done

J.H. Sillevis Smitt
Translated by Jack Van Meggelen

The Lord's Prayer starts with God himself as "Our Father in heaven." From there it speaks about the name of God which must receive its rightful place on earth. Then it pleads, with longing, for the realization of God's kingdom on earth, the new order of things filled with his holiness, love and will.

Now the prayer comes to us personally. It touches our own will and inner self. The prayer that lifts us out of the chaos and into God's kingdom finds its climax in the third petition: "your will be done."

After all, the root cause of all our problems on earth is the rebellion of our hearts against God and his kingdom. Wanting to do our own thing and refusing to listen to God is the source of all the chaos in this world.

There are only a few axioms in life. One of them is that there will never be a renewed world if there are no renewed people. The world does not make people the way they are, people make the world the way it is. Bad people make a bad world. Good people make a good world. Rebellious people make a destructive and explosive world. The evil one only has power because, and as far as, people want to give him power. The world reflects who we are.

There are still many good things to be found in people and society. We can thank God for that. But one thing is unarguably wrong with the human race. Our hearts are diseased, and our wills are turned away from God, at cross purposes with him.

I have said that most people's lives are wrapped in unrealistic dreams. Among the false ideas or 'truths' which tyrannize them is the belief that freedom means being allowed to do whatever you desire, that doing your own thing guarantees human rights and happiness. At the same time, many insist that obedience – not doing your own thing – is a sign of weakness. They see it as a form of servitude which precludes the possibility of happiness and contentment.

Of course, the exact opposite is true. Wherever people stubbornly follow their own will, they lose their freedom and become tyrants. Persisting in their own way they eventually find themselves unable to change direction and follow their own pigheaded undisciplined way. They have become slaves to themselves, and that is the worst kind of servitude.

C. S. Lewis once said that the reality of hell is nothing but this, that whoever consistently says to God, "Not your will but my will be done" will one day, after a thousand and one warnings, hear God respond, "OK, your will be done!" Hell is the epitome of being stuck in your own will, and being fixated in rebellion and in the drive to uphold your will. The consequences of following your own will include a curse and a taste of hell.

It is equally true that obedience brings a foretaste of heaven. It may seem that I write this calmly and without much thought, but very hard lessons in the school of life have taught me to say this humbly and respectfully. Wherever people, in their desire to maintain their status and rights, rebel against God, a fire is ignited that is not easily extinguished. A worm begins to gnaw that is not easily eradicated; a restlessness is born which does not easily die; a fear springs up that is not easily calmed. But, when God's will becomes our will, and we give ourselves over to his love and will, a happiness and peace follow which give an exciting foretaste of the world to come.

Actually, the human will is a funny thing. We say that some people have iron wills. Yet, under duress most wills bend rather quickly. Very few prove to have a will that even approximates the strength of iron. Most of the time, the will is no more than a loose conglomeration of egocentric tendencies, desires and wants. It is made up of an ill-defined collection of selfish pride, opinionated assertiveness, and a stubborn focus on the all-important 'me'.

But God is the author of life, and it was his will that placed the creation in time, and then bound it together with laws. Always and everywhere, God is God, unchangeable and immovable. His will is the expression of his love, his truth, and his goodness which are also unchangeable, immovable and eternal. He will never forsake his love, truth and goodness.

Therefore God cannot tolerate any wrongfulness that lives in us. It has to go! If it refuses to go, God will soon confront it. He is so gracious and patient that he gave his Son to redeem us from the evil within us. But he allows no room for the evil itself, which has its root and cause in our own will and obstinacy. All who still want to assert their independence from God and continue to stand up against him, will collide with the Eternal One, and this results in annihilation.

The characteristic of a Christian is learning to say, gladly and freely: "Not me, but you. Not my will but your will be done." As Christians we long for obedience, and we pray with our whole heart: Father,... your will be done.

There are two things I would like to point out regarding obedience. First, obedience is tied to free will. Voluntary obedience leads to freedom. God does not require capitulation, he asks for obedience. This means a freely chosen submission and joyful acceptance.

We don't usually operate that way. We tend to impose our will on others. Cajoling others into accepting our ideas and desires is second nature to us. But God does not do that, he leaves us free, sometimes beyond our comprehension. If people refuse to follow him, he calls to them and woos them, he urges and nudges them, but he never compels them.

The Christian religion rules out compulsion. The very heart of faith beats with the rhythm of freedom. God wants children, not slaves. Compulsion makes slaves, but obedience is the hallmark of children. "My son, give me your heart."

The second point is this: obedience leads to happiness. Disobedience is a little bit of hell; obedience is a little taste of heaven. If I do not obey the natural laws for breathing, but try to hold my breath I will suffocate. When I breathe regularly without straining, I feel free and unhampered. Similarly, a full and voluntary acceptance of God's will brings freedom and happiness. When the perfect will of our heavenly Father begins to guide us, we will no longer be dominated by either a slave-like subservience or a disgraceful egotism. Instead, we'll be saved from ourselves and become free – content in the presence of the wisdom and love of God. Our free will rests in accepting the will of God.

The sign of the cross

The third petition, "your will be done," is very short and to the point. It compels us to look at ourselves and to ask the question, "Where am I in my life? Am I obedient or rebellious? Is my life's direction focused on deceit or submission to God? Do I resent the will of God, and find it repulsive and demeaning, or is the holy will of God my delight and joy?"

This petition demands a radical decision: submission or rebellion. At this point in the prayer we will have to bend or break! I wrote earlier that the Lord's Prayer crucifies us. It delivers the final blow to our old self with its pride and conceit and ego. This is the turning point in the prayer. When you pray these words honestly, relinquishing the primordial urge of your old self to exert its own will, you will place this petition before the throne of God and say, "Father, deliver me from my old self. Take away my foolish pride and make me obedient to you only."

You can't mess with obedience. A reluctant obedience is just another form of disobedience. Obedience born out of fear is slavery. What is needed here is a happy, trusting acceptance without murmur and complaint, without suspicion or second-guessing. We need to accept with certainty that God is our Father, and that in all circumstances he knows what is best for us.

Don't underrate this third petition. Pride and self-will are deeply rooted in our psyche. They are part and parcel of our deep-rooted thoughts and beliefs. Praying this petition with honesty demands that we crucify ourselves. When we pray "your will be done" in earnest and with a pure heart, we get an inkling of the fear and terror that Jesus faced when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father,... not as I will, but as you will."

In following their risen Lord, God's children learn obedience through suffering. We must fight an intense battle against our inner self; we must face fear and despair; we must surrender our suspicions and misconceptions before we can pray, not just with our lips but with our whole heart, your will be done.

Once again we come to the dual question: Can I pray this? Do I want to pray this? Do I want to be marked with the sign of the cross? Will I let the vertical connection with God wipe out the horizontal connection with my old self? Am I prepared to lose my life so that I can find it back in a new life with Christ? Am I no longer afraid of God's will, and have I lost my aversion to it?

It is noteworthy that this petition which speaks of doing God's will also speaks of heaven. Heaven is heaven because that is where God's will is done perfectly. If you want to receive that little bit of heaven already here and now on earth, let God's will be your law in every detail of your life. Completely! Let God be your God, whenever, and forever.

As long as we suspect or feel that submission to God's will results in humiliation and slavery, we have little understanding and awareness of the enslavement of the human race. For we are inclined to be bound by our own views and live by the foolish domination of our own will. Then we also have no understanding of the freedom and happiness which is found in the obedience of God's children.

Lord teach us to pray, consciously and honestly, "Your will be done!" And when confronted by your will, teach us also to fulfill it as quickly and completely as your angels in heaven.

Stewardship

Believers paying to get catechetical instruction

G. Jeffrey MacDonald

Back in 1992, the prospect of delving into the mysteries of God or Catholic tradition attracted precious few adult learners – just 500 all year – to a variety of short programs offered through a center at the College of St. Elizabeth in Morristown, N.J.

Fast-forward to today and the problem is finding space to accommodate the 5,000 to 7,000 who sign up annually. For one day-long program on spirituality in 2003, the Center for Theological and Spiritual Development had to erect a tent to shelter half of the 2,000 adults who descended on campus despite the $30 course fee. Dozens more were turned away.

Across America, adult learners are seeking out teachers they believe will help them find God. From online forums with religious experts to short courses on Sabbath observance or on the fictional thriller *The DaVinci Code*, high participation rates suggest basic religious education is not just for children anymore. Call it Sunday school for adults.

Spiritual appetites

Spiritual appetites are longing for nourishment beyond the traditional church-based Bible study. And those meeting today's demand for knowledge are often not the neighborhood pastor, rabbi, or imam. Instead, specialized centers and franchised programs are using big names and focused topics to educate grownups on one facet or another of the major religions.

As denominational leaders frequently watch from the sidelines, adults are learning what they want to know, which is sometimes orthodox and sometimes not. Either way, it's motivated adult students, who want results for their time and money and who are increasingly shaping agendas for religious education.

Program planners are hearing the pleas from adults like Donna Smith, an at-home mother of four in Roselle, Ill. Growing up, she says, her family "went to church but never talked about faith."

Now, to help herself and children understand what Roman Catholics do and why, she has sought out four-week courses offered beyond her home parish on topics from Luke's gospel to the mission of the church.

"I'm hoping if I give them a solid foundation, my kids will someday live as Catholics," says Mrs. Smith. She tells them, for instance, what she learns in class about the mysteries of the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper. Now, she says, they like to sit up front during mass to watch the priest's every move.

What they are learning

From the pew to the shul, adults seem eager to learn. In Jewish learning centers, where adult students can choose among short courses on everything from Hebrew to Jewish politicians and Jewish comedy, the highest demand nationwide is for courses dealing with religious basics. Topics such as ritual observance, the Bible, the Talmud, spirituality, prayer, and Jewish ethics consistently attract the most active students, according to a study of Jewish education in the new millennium by scholars at Hebrew University and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

At Islamic centers, training sessions to help ordinary Muslims explain their faith to outsiders in the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, have become a popular staple. And in Christian circles, the hottest seminar knows no denominational boundaries. The Alpha Course, billed as "an opportunity to explore the meaning of life," is adding about 1,000 new sessions per year in the US for a total of 7,286 as of Aug. 2.

Faith education in every generation has been an attraction for adults at times of major transition – childbirth, the death of a parent, or a crisis such as divorce or job loss. The task, says John Elias, professor of religion and education at Fordham University, is always to "reinterpret and explain a [religious] meaning system from childhood in adult language and adult context."

Yet today's adults are seeking extra knowledge in fresh ways, he says, for another reason: Many came of age in the 1960s and '70s when "doctrinal rigidity gave way to experience sharing" as a mode of faith education. "They feel shortchanged," Mr. Elias says. "They feel they never got their grounding in the basics."

Other adult learners, however, are creating demand for courses that challenge those very basics. One example: Hundreds of discussion groups have formed from coast to coast this year to tackle "The DaVinci Code," a bestselling novel that depicts church doctrine as a mere product of ancient politics.

Higher expectations

The result is that, whether someone is drawn back to a religious tradition in adulthood or repelled further away from it, educators from varied backgrounds are standing ready to serve up whatever's hot.

In prior decades, "adult Christian education was taken extremely seriously," according to Louis Weeks, professor of historical theology at Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Va.

Local churches and seminaries in the early 20th century took the lead, he says, developing adult curricula and teacher training resources so good that many parishes today choose them over the newer alternatives.

More recently, however, local churches have generally failed to keep pace with demand. Priest shortages in Catholic churches, for instance, have made adult education a luxury in many cases. What's more, parishioners have raised the bar of expectation.

For some adult learners, the social contacts are as important as course content. For that reason, the Alpha Course makes sure to always begin with a meal, followed by a video with plenty of humor, before engaging the serious claims of Christianity, according to Alpha New England director Willard Cook.

"The main reason people come to church is for relationships," Mr. Cook says. "It's not the content that's the important part of Alpha. It's the relationships. That's the glue."

Jeffrey MacDonald is a writer for The Christian Science Monitor

Gifted by God – my time

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick de Graaf

In the third chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes we read: "There is a time for everything … a time to be born a time to die," (Eccl. 3: 1a, 2a). How do I know how much time I get? Who determines it? We know the answer – God does. But it's easy to forget or ignore. What's more important is that we forget that God has a purpose in mind. While we're alive it means we have time to serve and make a difference for his kingdom in all that we do. After Christ it's the only work that matters.

Consider you are – your various roles:

- Brother or sister
- A parent or grandparent
- A son or daughter
- A friend or protagonist
- A child, teen, adult or senior
- A classmate or colleague
- A caregiver or care taker
- A believer or unbeliever
- A student, worker, unemployed or retired
- A leader or follower or both

You can add to the list, but notice that you touch the lives of people, of many people, each day. It's an investment of yourself, of the time that God gives you each day.

In managing your time, it is important to have a long-term perspective. There's nothing longer than eternity, and we know that the Bible teaches that what's done for Christ and his kingdom will last. But it's often hard for us to stop to take a moment to reflect on: "Where am I going?" and "How am I making a difference in terms of God's kingdom?" We are so busy with living!

Stephen Covey, in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* says that we need to take time out to "sharpen-the-saw." He shared this story [p. 287]:

Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree. "What are you doing?" you ask.

"Can't you see" comes the impatient reply. "I'm sawing down this tree."

"You look exhausted!" you exclaim. "How long have you been at it?"

"Over five hours," he returns, "and I'm beat! This is hard work."

"Well, why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?" you inquire. "I'm sure it would go a lot faster."

"I don't have time to sharpen the saw," the man says emphatically. "I'm too busy sawing!"

We would do well to examine ourselves and reflect on how effective we are in using our time and what a difference we are making in terms of God's kingdom. It's the stewardly thing to do!

Stewardly Tip: *Do the I-don't-want-to-do it jobs first.*

"Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task" [William James]. Ever notice that the thing you don't feel like doing or dread to do gets put off again and again (procrastinated). Just think of the time you waste just thinking about it and being hung up about it. Do something about it now! Get it done or least get it started. It's the only way to get it out of your mind and stop the fretting about it. It will help make the rest of your day better.

Readers: *We want to share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can do our part to make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Please write or email or visit the CC website. Please leave your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or, if we need to, we can ask you for more details.*

Next issue: *Gifted by God: – my talents*

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Jesus Christ came to tell men that they have no enemies but themselves.

... Blaise Pascal

Short story

Wedding Dress ..part 2

Cathy Smith

It was on her way to Bethel Manor the morning after the shower when she first noticed the dress in the window at Darlene's Bridal Salon. She had never paid much attention to the shop before. The mannequin faced away from the street, so that all you could see was the back of the dress. Her glance took in puffed sleeves and a bow sitting low on the back. A diaphanous veil cascaded from the wreath in the mannequin's hair. A wave of wistfulness passed over her. To wear such a dress! No wonder Shirley was so elated!

Every morning and evening since then Katherine just couldn't help herself. She would look at the shimmering white gown and allow herself a momentary daydream. Wouldn't you feel like a princess in such a gown! She wondered what the front of the dress was like. Anything so exquisite in the back must be equally stunning in the front. She took in more details every time she drove past. There were buttons all the way down the back, right to the bow. The neckline was scalloped and plunged to a deep V between the shoulders. She couldn't tell if there was a train, and she found herself curious, wanting to know.

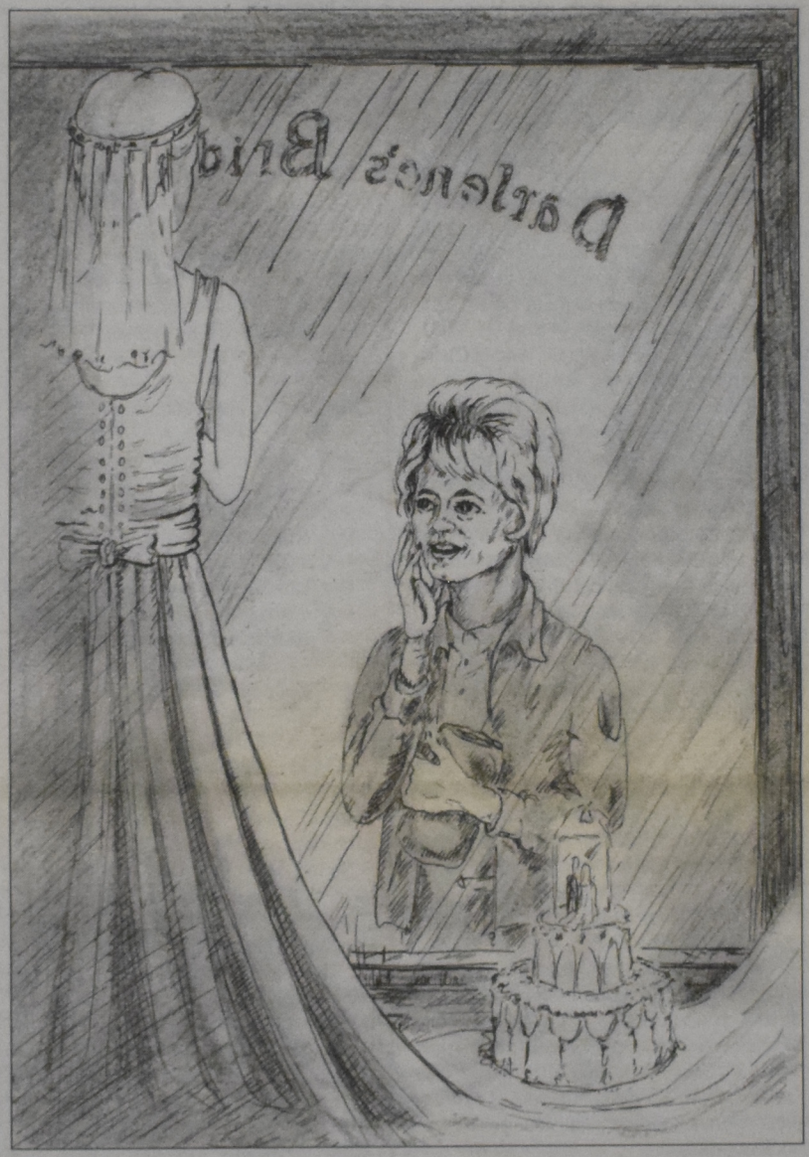
Shirley's wedding day arrived three weeks later. The weather was perfect. The church had been decorated with white tulle, satin bows, and ivy-wrapped candelabra. The groom and best man and ushers wore black tuxedos and their shoes gleamed. The bridesmaids walked down the aisle first, their purple satin dresses reflecting the sunlight that poured through the stained glass windows of the church. Then came Shirley, poised and confident, on her father's arm. Her dress shone and her smile was jubilant.

Katherine had a few weepy moments when the vows were exchanged. Her own loss seemed so conspicuous at such a joyous occasion. Reverend Hamstra delivered a brief meditation about a cord of three strands, starting a new life with Jesus as an integral part of the marriage. He leaned over the pulpit and spoke directly to the couple: "No matter what may happen in your future life together, when you're walking with Jesus, you're heading in the right direction."

She liked their pastor. He was a good man who had tried more than once to convince Edward to consider counseling. Throughout the rest of the service and through the dinner and reception, his words lingered in her mind.

The Friday after Shirley's wedding, a huge SALE sign blocked Katherine's view of the gown in the window. The thought that the gown might be sold before she had had a chance to see the front irked her. That's when it crossed her mind, Why not just stop by after work and have a look?

She found herself shyly entering Darlene's Bridal Salon at 4:30 the very same afternoon. A woman with bleached blond



hair in an upswept style and painted fingernails was sitting at a desk reading a book. Her ebullient welcome nearly sent Katherine back out the door. "Can I help you?" she asked. "July is an excellent time to buy. It's time to make room for the incoming fall stock. As you can see, everything is reduced." And with a sweeping gesture, she indicated the racks of wedding gowns lined up on either side of the boutique.

Katherine hesitated, acutely aware, suddenly, of her custodian's uniform. "Well, I just wanted to look at the gown in the window. I've been admiring it for some time on my way to work every day."

The saleslady motioned her over to the window display. "Yes, this is a magnificent gown, isn't it? It's from Saks. It was featured in the Spring Issue of Bride magazine." She went to her desk, searched among papers and magazines and pulled out the right issue. And sure enough, there it was in the magazine, modeled by a dewy young woman standing on a flagstone path leading to a mansion in the background.

Katherine was feeling ill at ease, but the woman was warming to her task. "This is the loveliest dress in my shop right now, I think. Well, I mean, they're all beautiful, of course, but this one just had to go in the window display. I think the neckline is so feminine, isn't it, scalloped that way? It's a little low, but a hint of cleavage is OK, don't you think? If you've got it, flaunt it, that's what I say."

Katherine nodded, reaching out a tentative hand to touch the sleeve, intricately beaded with seed pearls and trimmed with appliqued lace. A tiny satin bow hung beneath the shoulder puff, and little strands of pearls swung free. The sleeve ended in a point at the wrist, detailed with more lace and pearls. "Is there a train?" she managed to ask.

The saleslady stepped over a small white iron fence into the window display and swiveled the mannequin slightly so that the back of the dress could be seen. There was the train, not long, but elegantly styled with a diamond-shaped lace cutout accented with sequins and pearls.

"Well, what do you think? Isn't it gorgeous? Of course, I have plenty others I could show you." She hopped the little fence, already bustling over to the rack to pull out some other choices.

"No," Katherine shook her head and smiled politely. "I was just looking." She turned to go, adding, "They certainly make beautiful wedding dresses these days."

The woman, sensing that her customer was readying a departure, seized the offensive. "Wouldn't you like to try it on? I'm sure we have it in your size. What are you, about a 14? You can't really tell about a gown, you know, unless you try it on. Is it for yourself, or your daughter, perhaps?

Katherine was surprised that the woman could possibly think that she was shopping for herself. Then she remembered. She'd taken off her wedding ring the day Edward had come with the U-Haul and emptied the house of all his things. The pang of that memory birthed a rush of independence and adventure.

"Well, it would be fun to try it on. Yes, I'm a size 14. You're good with sizes."

The blond woman smiled and said, "It's comes with the territory. I'm Darlene, by the way. Here, step into this dressing room and start changing and I'll find the dress for you. "

When she returned with the gown, she deftly slipped off the plastic, entered the changing area, and hung the dress on a hook. Just holler when you're ready for some help with the buttons. I'll get a crinoline for you, too." She continued the conversation through the screened partition. "Is this a first or a second marriage for you?"

Katherine was stumped, not wanting to lie. Before she could muster a response, Darlene called out cheerfully, "My children were happy for me when I remarried, but my husband's kids sure weren't, I can tell you that! Inheritance, you know." She reentered, buttoning up the gown, and demonstrating how the elasticized crinoline fit easily under the dress. "Do you have any children to deal with?"

Relieved that she could answer this truthfully, Katherine responded, "Three. Two daughters and a son. My oldest, Tracy, is expecting her first."

This announcement triggered an excited squeal from Darlene. "I'm going to be a grandma, too! My daughter is five months along. Well, how about that! I am so looking forward to my first grandchild, aren't you?" Her attention spun back to the dress. "Now, careful. I've got your train. Just step up on that little stool there in front of the three-way mirror, so you can see the full effect."

The full effect was breathtaking. Katherine hardly recognized herself. There

Short story

was a new person, transformed by swirls of white fabric. The bodice glimmered with sequins, and the silk skirt, billowed by the crinoline, rustled enticingly as she moved.

"Wait," Darlene commanded. "We'll just put that veil on you, too." She had Katherine step down for a moment and placed the circlet of white silk flowers and flowing chiffon on her head. This final touch made Katherine tingle. Could that really be her in the mirror?

"You look dazzling. Simply amazing. That dress was made for you." Darlene's huckster pitch had been replaced by genuine admiration.

Katherine, too, was thunderstruck by her instantaneous conversion from custodian to royalty. "I think this dress is even more beautiful than the one Tracy wore at her wedding," she marveled. She half-turned to check out the profile view.

Darlene's attention was diverted to babies again by the mention of Tracy. "Has your daughter picked a name for her baby, yet?"

"No, I don't think so."

Darlene indicated the book on her desk. "I was just looking through a name book when you came in. Holly, that's my daughter, said I could help her make a list of names to consider. Guess what my name means? Little darling one. Cute for a woman my age, eh." She smirked at her own joke. "What's your name?"

"Katherine."

"Know what it means?"

Katherine shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. "No." In the mirror she saw the little strands of pearls on the sleeves dance coquettishly.

Darlene reached for her book and began flipping pages. "How do you spell it? C or K?

"K."

"Ah, here it is. It means 'pure one'."

Katherine blanched. Pure one! The irony stung. Once again tears welled. She gazed at the blurry white image in front of her, ethereal as a fairy in a storybook. Then, a tantalizing idea came upon her, subtle and insistent, like the wind whispering through the poplars alongside her driveway. She brusquely wiped her wet cheeks.

Still reading her book, Darlene hadn't noticed her reaction. "Funny how today everyone picks those unisex names, you know, or really weird names? What's wrong with these names? She started reading off the other names on the page. Katrina, Kay, Kelly, Kendra..."

"I'll take the dress," Katherine interrupted. Darlene looked up, startled, but obviously pleased.

"Why, that's fantastic. It suits you perfectly. Traditional and elegant is always right for an older bride, that's what I always say."

Half an hour later the dress and veil were boxed up with tissue and Katherine's VISA card was on the desk, doubt already needling her. The total was over $1000! That could pay for her property taxes, or help Tilda with her college expenses.... Resolutely, she pushed her qualms away. The vision she had been given was simply too irresistible. Perhaps she could sell the gown later.

That evening, having hidden the box in her bedroom, Katherine made a list of things to do. Very early in the morning, while Tilda slept in, as she usually did on Saturdays, Katherine loaded her car with a vacuum cleaner, Windex, paper towels, rags, Pinesol, vases, and a pail of water with a tight-fitting lid. She drove about ten minutes down the sideroad to Highway 6. At the corner, she stopped and picked some tiger lilies, daisies, and cornflowers from the ditch. Then she got back in her car and headed west for another five minutes.

As she parked her car in the little square parking lot, Katherine was delighted by her inspiration. The little Wayside Chapel for Travellers would be perfect. Built by the Cadets many years ago as a project for a woodworking badge, the tiny building was about the size of her kitchen. But it was a true country church, with white siding, a black roof, gold gothic windows, and a steeple topped with a white cross.

As she had hoped, the black front door was unlocked, and she stepped inside. Two half-pews were arranged on either side of a centre aisle which led to an open area at the front. The carpet was deep blue. A faded Oriental rug was positioned in front of a raised platform on which sat a lectern and an open Bible. The lectern did not face the pews, however, but a window opposite the front door. This window, too, was made of amber glass, and was overlaid with a polished wooden cross. A rack on the wall contained a few yellowed tracts and pamphlets. A thick layer of dust lay on everything and a wasp buzzed overhead. Cobwebs hung from every corner.

Katherine checked and found an electrical outlet by the door. She wasted no time. Though it was still early, the heat was already oppressive. It was going to be a scorcher of a day. First, she took out her pail of water, removed the cover, and scooped some water with the vases. She arranged the wildflowers in them and placed them in the shade of a nearby shrub, hoping they wouldn't wilt. Then she dragged the vacuum cleaner into the church, and vacuumed the corners, the floor, and the window sills thoroughly. Next, she carried the pail of water into the building. She mixed in some Pinesol, and scrubbed the pews and windows. By the time she wiped down the walls, she was perspiring profusely. She sprayed the windows with Windex and polished them with paper towels. She even did the outside panes. The mellow light which filtered through the newly-cleaned windows shone on the pews. As a final touch, she brought in the vases and placed one on either side of the platform.

When she was finished, she stood for a moment in the doorway surveying her work. Beads of sweat trickled down her face. The miniature church was spotless. She smiled with satisfaction and anticipation.

Katherine drove home and put away all of the cleaning supplies. She showered, and then called Tilda out of bed. While Tilda ate her cereal, she embarked on the next stage of her plan.

"Tilda, you have to do me a favor this morning, OK?"

"Sure, Mom, what is it?"

"I want you to call the girls from Bethel and invite them to the Wayside Chapel at 3:00 this afternoon." Tilda's eyebrows arched in curiosity. Katherine corrected herself. "No, wait, don't bother calling Shirley. She'll still be on her honeymoon. Or Lucy. She's on holidays, too. Call Janice, Barbara, Melissa and Grace. See if one of them can give you a ride there, too. They probably can't all make it on such short notice, but one or two would be nice. Here are the numbers. Just say that it's a big favor for me, and you don't know what it is about."

"Why, Mom? What's going on?"

"Never mind. It's a surprise for you, too. Now, I have to go to town and get groceries and you get on the phone while I'm gone."

"But, Mom," Tilda persisted. "What's going on? What are you up to?"

"Something fun," Katherine promised. "Bye," she called as she let the screen door slam behind her. When she returned about an hour or so later with groceries and the mail from the post office in town, Tilda met her at the door to help unload.

"Well," she said, "I did what you asked. Grace can come, and she will pick me up. Melissa can come, too. But Barbara and Janice are both at First Church's picnic today."

"That's great, honey. Thanks. I want you to bring our camera, too, OK, when Grace picks you up." Katherine would divulge no further details. For the rest of the afternoon, a smile hovered on her lips and her eyes twinkled with her secret. She wouldn't even let Grace in the house when she came for Tilda, but chased them both away with assurances that the mystery would soon be revealed.

It was 3:30. Tilda, Grace and Melissa were seated on the two front pews speculating about the flowers and the surprise. Even in their summer t-shirts and shorts, the heat in the tiny chapel was stifling. A heavy grey sky and ominous rumbles signaled a coming thunderstorm. They had propped open the front door to let in some breeze, and it seemed that the wind was picking up a little, soughing through the lofty oak trees overhead. Then they heard the roll of tires on gravel. A car door slammed and Katherine stood in the doorway.

The three women rose, speechless. Katherine waited, savoring the moment. She carried a bouquet of tiger lilies, cornflowers, daisies, and white parasol-shaped Queen Anne's Lace. In the hazy ochre light of the chapel the wedding gown glowed with a luminous blue sheen. Before anyone could say anything, Katherine attempted a lighthearted explanation. "Guess what I found out yesterday? What my name means. It means 'pure'."

Although she began with a smile, she choked a little on 'pure'. Tilda made a motion to get up, but Grace placed a restraining hand on her arm. "Go ahead, Katherine," she quietly urged. "Walk down the aisle. You look gorgeous."

So Katherine proceeded down the aisle, the skirt crushed by the narrow passage, her train still at the door when she reached the front of the church. She turned around and said, "I planned something to say."

She knelt and faced the cross. Tremulously, she recited the text she had decided upon: "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'."

Then, without warning, a loud crack of thunder shattered the ensuing silence. All four women gasped, and then burst out laughing at their simultaneous fright.

Katherine lifted her gown, got to her feet, swung around and said,"Well, is someone going to take my picture?" Tilda gave her a hug, and so did Grace and Melissa.

"I'll go to the car to get the camera," Grace offered.

"What's all of this about, Mom?" Tilda asked, baffled, but sensing the poignant undercurrent.

"I'll explain it to you later, honey. What do you think of this gown? Isn't it just glorious?" Tilda nodded and touched the brocaded sleeve admiringly.

"I love the veil and that crown of flowers," said Melissa. "It's such a delicate and airy look."

Grace took a couple of snapshots in the dim sanctuary and then wanted to take some more shots on the front step. "I'll have to use a flash outside, too, since it's getting so dark. That storm is almost on us!"

Melissa persuaded Katherine to pose beside the sign at the highway. Several passersby honked their congratulations to the bride as they whizzed by.

A few huge droplets heralded the cloudburst. In seconds the rain was sluicing down in sheets. Melissa, Grace and Tilda dashed to the cars.

"C'mon, Mom, you'll ruin your dress," Tilda shouted over her shoulder. Upon reaching the parking lot, however, they realized that she had not followed. They watched, bemused, as Katherine stood stock still in the pelting rain, arms raised and face tilted upwards. Though they couldn't see it from where they were standing, her expression was triumphant.

Review

A year without technology is freeing – and exhausting

Marilyn Gardner

Better Off: Flipping the Switch on Technology
By Eric Brende
HarperCollins 233 pp., $24.95

Life-altering experiences can come in odd ways. For Eric Brende, a Yale graduate, everything changed on a bus ride from Boston to Kansas a decade ago, when he met a man in a wide-brimmed black hat who "looked Amish." The man explained that his Mennonite-style community prohibits all motors – no electricity, telephones, or motor vehicles.

Click! Before you could say "kerosene lamp" or "horse-drawn carriage," Brende was making a not-so-modest proposal to live with the group for 18 months. As a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he wanted to discover how little technology was actually necessary for human comfort and leisure.

The group agreed to his request. Soon Brende and Mary, his bride of 10 days, were driving into the cloistered village, "deep in America's heartland," and settling into a white bungalow stripped of all amenities. Goodbye lights, running water, refrigerator, washer, dryer, microwave, and central heat.

As Brende describes their unusual adventure in *Better Off*, a giddy enthusiasm colors their early days. He masters the art of cutting the grass with a push mower. His wife claims that the beat of a treadle sewing machine makes her more alert. Both insist that operating a crank-handled washing machine is "really rather cathartic." They even savor the pleasure of canning food together. When chores are done, Brende reads *The Education of Henry Adams* by the flicker of a kerosene lamp.

Ah, the good old days.

As weeks pass, their waistlines shrink, their muscles grow firm, and their satisfaction increases. "I was beginning to see evidence that a world without modern technology need not be any harder," Brende explains. "It might well be easier. And more fun."

Yet gradually, his gee-whiz tone is tempered. Weary of the sullenness that besets him after a string of gray wintry days, he concedes that "a standard 60-watt incandescent light bulb might have helped."

And then there's the biggest test of all – threshing season. "Threshing wheat without modern equipment had shocked me out of my senses," he writes, calling it "a form of naked physical toil that only a glutton for punishment would willingly engage in." So punishing is the work under a scorching sun that he collapses in bed for three days. When he asks, "Was there a need for more machinery?" A reader can only nod a silent yes.

Still, as the Brendes grow their own food in the garden, join forces with neighbors for collective tasks, and await the birth of their first child, friendships develop. The book offers fascinating insights into the workings of a Mennonite community – the rhythms of daily life, the camaraderie, the quiet politeness of children, and the four-hour church services.

But here, as everywhere, domestic squabbles and tensions develop. On one stifling summer day, as the men gather for a barn-raising, the women crowd into steamy kitchens to prepare food for the group. One weary wife probably echoes the sentiments of others when she shouts to her husband, "You'd better never have a work bee in this weather again. So much cooking in this heat."

All of which underscores Brende's original question: Is life without all the technological advances we take for granted – in this case air-conditioning – really better? Brende is correct when he argues that "a modern automatic machine is no mere inert tool. It gobbles up energy; it demands care and maintenance. It not only serves but must be served." He also makes a persuasive case for simplicity: "By speeding through life with technology, you reduce what any given moment can hold. By slowing down, you expand it."

Yet the couple's own ambivalence surfaces briefly during their initial reluctance to part with their red Ford Escort, "our last thread to our former lives." In time, they do buy a horse and carriage and find at least temporary pleasure in this slower, open-air transportation.

Although the Brendes returned to the wired world after a year in the community they dub the "Minimites," their noble experiment continues to shape their new lives in St. Louis. Eric is a soapmaker and rickshaw driver, and Mary home schools their three children. They shun television, computers, and videos, and drive only when they must.

In the evening, they still sometimes turn on a kerosene lamp and read by the fire. "By switching off the electric light," Brende notes, "I think we see a bit better."

Brende's prose is occasionally overwrought, and he indulges in a few too many wide-eyed epiphanies about the joys of nature. When he catches his first glimpse of a pumpkin growing in his very own patch, for instance, he rhapsodizes: "I gazed at it with the adoration of a father beholding his firstborn child." Similarly, a firefly in the house puts the couple under a "spell," leaving them "feeling snugger knowing a little fairy was guarding our cornice."

Still, excesses aside, the Brendes' experience may stimulate readers to think about the role modern technology plays in their own lives. But rather than inspire them to renounce it, the book is more likely to produce a surge of gratitude for the warm glow of a lamp and the convenience of appliances that free them for other activities. Most of us will probably always feel "better off" with the power switched on.

Words with a hook

Phil de Haan

The Catch: Families, Fishing, and Faith
by William J. Vande Kopple
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
144 pages, $15.00 (US)

It wouldn't be fair to say that Bill VandeKopple's thoughts are turning to fishing as salmon season nears in West Michigan.

Truth be told the Calvin College English professor rarely goes for too long without his mind turning to thoughts of streams, rivers and lakes and the treasures hidden beneath the surface. Yet, at the beginning of the school year the long-time professor will need to focus his attention on textbooks, assignments and syllabi.

Still when salmon season comes this fall, the odds are pretty good VandeKopple might sneak out for a bit some afternoon to wet a line and pursue the puzzle of catching a fish.

And somewhere down the road this fall's excursion may find its way to pen and paper, the way fishing stories of the past have in his new book called simply *The Catch*.

Published by Eerdmans, *The Catch* is subtitled "families, fishing and faith." And just a little time with VandeKopple makes it clear that all three Fs are important to him. The order of importance is, perhaps, still being worked out. Or perhaps it depends on what river he's on that day and whether the fish are biting or not!

The Catch spins together 20 stories – most of them modest in length, ranging from four pages to 27 pages – with fishing ostensibly at their center. Many of them involve VandeKopple's three boys – now all strapping, young men ranging in height from 6'2" to 6'6" – and their adventures in fishing with their father. Some of them backtrack further, to when VandeKopple himself was a boy and first fished; those often draw in VandeKopple's father and other relatives. But all of the stories say something, often implicitly, about life and faith and what's important.

VandeKopple says fishing and writing have similar appeals for him.

"They're both kind of a puzzle he says. "In fishing obviously you're trying to figure out where the fish are, what to use to catch them, what they're hitting on. But when you write you're puzzling out things too; the arc of the story, how it begins and where it ends and why. That can be really hard sometimes. But in both cases – in fishing and in writing – it's very satisfying when it all comes together. There's no thrill for me like the thrill of a strike. But finishing a story is pretty good too."

The Catch, while it deals with faith, is not a straight devotional says VandeKopple, noting that the first chapter in the book is entitled "Sex Ed: My Early Years." In that tale a young VandeKopple learns an important life lesson from his father – a tool-and-die maker – during a salmon fishing trip.

Rather, says VandeKopple, the book uses fishing as a focal point for musings about such topics as marriage, fatherhood, growing up, getting old, being scared, the heartache of a hurting son, keeping Sunday sacred and a host of other puzzles.

Those deep subjects are a natural outgrowth of his time spent in and on the water VandeKopple says.

"One of the things I like about fishing," he says, "is the chance to be reflective, to

continued on p.17...

Fundraising lessons: US rules don't apply

David van der Woerd

Blindly culling wisdom from the American experience in the evolving fundraising industry has it's own pitfalls, especially as our own government stands by scoping the playing field to determine how and when it will regulate the fundraising practices of charities. Some of those pitfalls were highlighted in a recent decision of Justice Jane A. Milanetti of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice in the case of Brantford General Hospital Foundation v. Marquis Estate (cited as 67 O.R. (3d) 432).

The case involved a pledge made by the late Helmi Marquis during her lifetime to the Brantford General Hospital. Before she died Mrs. Marquis promised to give the hospital $1 million. After making the first installment on that gift, she died. The hospital wanted the estate to pay the balance Mrs. Marquis had promised.

Mrs. Marquis and her late husband, Dr. Jack Marquis, were both generous philanthropists with an established record of providing significant financial assistance to charitable organizations. During their lifetimes the Marquis' gave extensively to the Brantford General Hospital and when Dr. Jack Marquis died he left them almost $2.8 million.

The restructuring of the health care system in the mid-1990's left the hospital in the unenviable position of having to raise substantial sums of money from the community. Over the years Mrs. Marquis herself also demonstrated a genuine love for the institution which was described in court as her "life and blood." She was known as a person of substantial means who had already donated substantial sums of money to the hospital. It was the place where she worked and where she first met her late husband and, after her retirement, where she volunteered for many years.

She was particularly fond of the coronary care unit which was named after her late husband. When Mrs. Marquis was approached to make a gift for the capital campaign, the proposed changes to the facility were explained to her including the movement and ultimate merger of Dr. Jack Marquis's Coronary Care Unit and the I.C.U. into a new critical care unit. In response, Mrs. Marquis expressed concern about whether her late husband's name would remain on his unit. Described as a humble individual who concerned herself little with public recognition, the hospital nonetheless suggested that she "take on the entire unit," putting both her name and that of her late husband on the newly merged critical care unit.

As suggested by the hospital Mrs. Marquis sought counsel from various advisors before committing to the gift, including her accountant on at least three occasions. At no time did she bring up that her name was to be used in recognition of the donation and this was very clearly irrelevant to her in her decision to make the commitment. Nonetheless, when she made the commitment, the hospital suggested that the unit be named after her and her late husband as a mechanism of showing their gratitude.

So Mrs. Marquis pledged to the hospital a million dollars to be paid over five years. Unfortunately, after she made the first $200,000 donation, she died. In her will she left the hospital a one-fifth share of the residue of her estate. The hospital accepted that but also wanted the balance of $800,000 owing on the pledge paid to them as well. Her estate refused to pay and the hospital sued.

The hospital had counted on that amount coming into their capital campaign and publicized the total funds raised as of that date for purposes of both a campaign kick-off and its representations to the government in their quest to achieve further approvals. When the estate refused to pay the balance of the gift, the hospital was forced to raise additional funds elsewhere.

Difference between US and Canadian law

The issue for Justice Milanetti was whether the pledge was an enforceable contract or merely a "naked promise." She observed the difference between Canadian and US jurisprudence on this point. American courts clearly have taken a considerably different approach than Canadian courts and have been much more willing to consider enforcement of these promises to pay. Canadian courts have followed English law that requires that consideration, however slight, must be proven and so a promise to subscribe to a charity would not be enforceable in the absence of a bargain.

Milanetti said that naming the unit after the Marquis' was not consideration for the pledge. She pointed out that the idea to name the unit after both of the Marquis' came from the hospital and not from Mrs. Marquis. She described Mrs. Marquis as having a humble and modest nature who never sought the naming of the unit as a condition for making the pledge. Rather, the hospital suggested this as a mechanism of showing their gratitude to her and her late husband. It was, therefore, not a condition of the pledge and therefore not a contract that could be enforced by the hospital.

Mrs. Marquis was an incredibly generous individual, who out of devotion to the hospital, made a large gift to it. Even though Mrs. Marquis intended to provide the foundation with this $1 million gift at the time of the pledge in addition to her substantial bequest, Milanetti would not enforce her intentions in the absence of an enforceable binding contract.

The next question was whether the partial performance of the pledge by the payment of $200,000 on account made the balance of the pledge enforceable. The hospital lawyers argued that the doctrine of estoppel applied which prevented the estate from denying the existence of a contract because Mrs. Marquis had already paid the first $200,000 installment of her pledge commitment.

Milanetti said the doctrine of estoppel could only succeed if there was a pre-existing legal relationship between the parties, which she had already concluded did not exist. On top of that, the hospital was unable to establish that they relied on the promise of Mrs. Marquis to their detriment. Even though Mrs. Marquis pledged $1 million that the hospital had counted on receiving, given that the phase of the project had not yet been commenced, they were unable to prove that they relied on this incomplete pledge to their detriment. They acknowledged that the project would go ahead regardless of whether the pledge was honoured and that they would need to raise additional funds over and above if the pledge failed.

As an aside, Milanetti also pointed out that the hospital received $800,000 from the Estate of Mrs. Marquis through her Will. Fortunately or not, those funds were not designated for the capital campaign and could be used wherever the hospital decided. As such, Milanetti found neither the facts to support a contractual relationship nor any detrimental reliance by the hospital foundation and therefore the doctrine of estoppel could not succeed.

Milanetti graciously refrained from making any order of costs against the hospital, despite their lack of success. The Court of Appeal, on the other hand, sent a different message after the hospital pressed the issue before the higher court, requesting the right to argue for a reversal of Milanetti's findings. The Court of Appeal issued a one-sentence ruling, dismissing the hospital's right to appeal and ordered costs against them.

There are lessons in this case for charities and their lawyers and other advisors. Among them is a cautionary note about blindly following the lead of US precedents set in relation to US fundraisers. While wisdom can always be garnered from observing what professional US fundraisers have developed on that side of the 49th parallel, as the business of professional fundraising continues to develop in this country and while the government continues to monitor the increased activities of that industry in this country with a view to regulating it in a more comprehensive fashion, knowledge and observance of Canadian law is paramount to ensuring that charities do not suffer from unforeseen surprises. The simple exporting of US protocol north of the border remains a risky proposition in this unique culture.

Charities that accept pledges as a method of fundraising also need to be aware of their inherent risks. Pledges remain an unenforceable instrument and as such charities need to recognize the difference between cash in hand and promises to pay. When charities rely upon pledges as the foundation for their capital campaigns, if those promises are not honoured due to unforeseen circumstances that arise between the time of the pledge and when it matures, the cornerstone of those fundraising efforts could be hallow, leaving the charity with no avenue of recourse.

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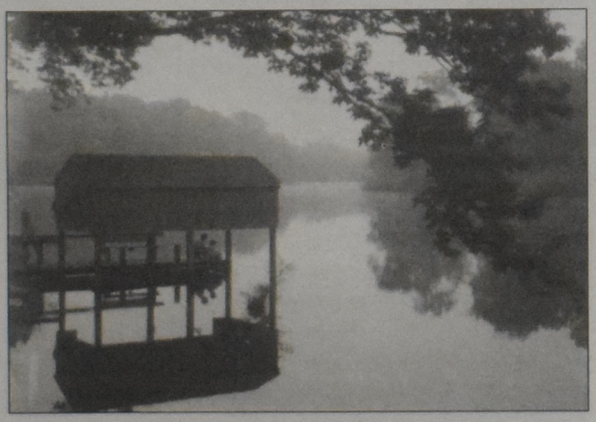
...continued from p. 16

be in a place that is silent and to concentrate on fishing, but also have time to think."



Interestingly, like any good fish story, *The Catch* is not completely non-fiction. Although it is based on real people and real fishing holes, in such Michigan locales as the Grand River, the Flat River, Hess Lake, Myers Lake and the Grand Haven pier, VandeKopple has fictionalized many of the stories.

"My parents," he says with a laugh, "are very happy about that and point out to everyone who buys the book that it's not all true."

Regardless of the degree of fiction or non-fiction what is plain is that life's lessons learned at the end of a rod and reel have benefitted Vande Kopple over the years. And now, thanks to *The Catch*, his reflections are being shared – the literary equivalent of the kind of fishing VandeKopple likes best: catch and release.

Africa still needs a lot of help

LONDON (Zenit.org) – Amid concern over economic stagnation in many African countries the British government is continuing to push a development plan to increase aid levels to the continent.

The initiative aims to spur efforts to meet the financing goals set out at a UN meeting held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002. The Monterrey meeting in turn was held to put in place measures to help developing nations meet the UN-set Millennium Development Goals for 2015. Launched in January 2003, the British Treasury and Development ministries propose the establishment of an International Finance Facility. A main role of the IFF would be to act as a financing mechanism to provide up to an additional $50 billion a year in development assistance between now and 2015. Other functions would include issuing bonds to raise additional funds and ensuring the eventual repayments to bondholders.

The IFF in particular aims to provide developing countries with firmer guarantees of aid, thereby enabling their governments to deal with the underlying causes of poverty, instead of adopting a bandaid approach. The British Treasury noted that without additional resources, African countries will not meet most of the Millennium Development Goals.

From dependency to independence

Details of the proposal contained in a document published April 8 by the British Treasury explained that, of the extra $50 billion called for under the IFF, at least $10 billion a year is estimated to be needed to achieve education for all. A further $10 billion is required to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. And up to $25 billion a year is needed to combat maternal and child mortality.

The document noted that about 770,000 children die from measles every year, while others are left blind, deaf or brain damaged. Yet, the cost per child of vaccination, including injection equipment, is a mere 26 cents. Just $25 per child will enable immunization against six major diseases – diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio, measles and TB. The scheme could increase the dependency of countries on aid in the short to medium term. Yet, the proposal affirmed that experience in some nations has shown that extra aid enables them to increase economic growth, in turn enabling an eventual reduction in aid. The British Treasury document argued that if aid to sub-Saharan Africa were doubled from the current $13 billion to $26 billion by 2006, and if gross domestic product grows at 4%, then revenue growth could start to substitute for the higher aid flows and sustain the higher total spending per capita by about 2020.

A family of orphan girls in Mwanza, Africa

Details of how the IFF will work still need to be finalized. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are now examining the proposal, with a report due this September.

Increase in poverty

Progress on the initiative to alleviate Third World debt has been slow, and falling commodity prices have left many poor countries struggling even after they have had some debts written off. Net aid to Africa rose about 35% in 2002 from a year earlier. "However, on a per-capita basis, it was $27 in 2002, way below the $40 in 1992," said Alan Harold Gelb, the World Bank's chief economist for the Africa region. Progress was also reported in education, with enrollments in primary schools reaching 87%, from 80% in 1980. And illiteracy rates dropped from 47% in 1997 to 37% in 2002.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair has formed a Commission for Africa. Blair set up the commission earlier this year to take a fresh look at why Africa has been the only continent to see its poverty increase over the last 25 years.

Political instability has been an important factor in the lack of economic progress in many African countries. Now that democracy has been strengthened in the continent, there are hopes that economic benefits will follow.

The Christian Science Monitor article pointed out that 43 of the 48 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have held at least one multiparty election during the past decade, compared with 1990, when just three nations were solidly democratic.

Newly re-elected South African President Thabo Mbeki is a champion of "good governance," noted the article. Mbeki is promoting the New Partnership for African Development, and the African Union, both of which seek to extend good government and democratic practices.

Mixed bag of economic news

The British proposals come amid varying reports on the economic situation in Africa. The World Bank noted that Africa's economic growth slowed to 2.4% last year. The World Bank, in its report "Global Development Finance 2004," put the blame on a climate-related agricultural downturn, and setbacks from armed conflicts. However, the report predicted that economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa will pick up this year, rising to 3.4%, and again in 2005, when it is expected to rise to 4.2%.

The report also observed that Africa's infrastructure needs are particularly acute. To meet the Millennium Development Goals, annual economic growth of 7% is needed, and the region will also need $18 billion a year in infrastructure financing.

Another World Bank study, "African Development Indicators 2004," showed that the continental growth figures conceal notable differences between countries: 13 sub-Saharan countries averaged more than 5% growth for the period 1995-2002, while many others saw their economies contract. The divergences stand out clearly in the data for gross national income per head. The average income level for 2002 was $307 in the sub-Saharan countries. But levels ranged from under $100 per head in the Democratic Republic of Congo to more than $7,000 in Seychelles. And while maternal mortality was as low as 45 per 100,000 births in Mauritius, it reached 2,300 per 100,000 births in Rwanda.

Overall, the World Bank calculates that fully half of the region's inhabitants still live in extreme poverty and Africa still houses about three-quarters of the world's poorest countries.

Dependency on commodity exports

One difficulty African countries face in climbing out of poverty is their heavy dependence on commodity exports. This leads to most countries being "boxed into a commodity trap that condemns them to poverty and indebtedness," said a study published by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The study observed that only one of the region's top 20 non-fuel exports – garments – is among the world's 20 most dynamic products. Of the 14 main non-fuel commodities of interest to Africa, 12 suffer from high price volatility and nine have seen long-run price falls. UNCTAD attributes part of the blame on farm subsidies in rich countries that have led to an oversupply and falling world prices for cotton, groundnuts and sugar.

Resolving Africa's economic problems will not be easy, and many factors, national and international, are involved. With the fate of over 700 million people in sub-Saharan Africa in the balance, local leaders and the international community face a grave responsibility.

The UN assesses progress toward development goals

In the first week of September the UN released a report on how well its benchmarks for progress in poor countries have been met over the past year.

It publishes the assessment of progress toward its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – targets established in 2000 for advancing welfare in the developing countries – every year. Some countries show great progress. Others fall far short.

The goals, set for 2015, cover eight areas: reduce the incidence of extreme poverty and hunger by half; provide universal access to primary education; promote the equality of women; reduce infant mortality by two-thirds (especially targeting measles); reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters; halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS and malaria; achieve "environmental sustainability" (reverse the loss of forests, improve access to clean water and sanitation); and form a "global partnership for development."

The Economist asks: "Why settle for reducing extreme poverty by only half? Why not aim for a cut of 80%, or 100% for that matter?" The UN considers these goals feasible, with cooperation between donors and governments. But, says *The Economist*, "The weakness of the whole MDG concept is that it wills the ends without willing the means – something which the UN, perforce, has come to specialise in. ... A statement of good intentions is unfortunately just that."

The Economist observes that high-level conferences, working groups, declarations, strategies and programs, all swearing allegiance to the MDG idea, are multiplying fantastically. But it questions whether all this bureaucratic work is actually doing anything for needy countries. "Let them eat reports," is a subtitle of one story.

Although East and South-East Asia have met or are on track to meet nearly all of the goals by 2015, sub-Saharan Africa is not meeting a single target. The decisive factor is economic growth not aid. Yet, *The Economist* concludes that certain kinds of aid, especially those aimed at specific health problems, are indispensable.

But, although aid here increased by $2.3 billion between 2002 and 2003, this includes reconstruction in Iraq, which gobbled up $2 billion. Regular contributions fell by $1.2 billion. Total official aid ($68.5 billion), comprised 0.25% of the donor countries' national incomes, up from 0.23% in 2002. The goal, however, is 0.7% of national income.

Still, spending to halt the spread of AIDS and other diseases (like malaria and tuberculosis) increased by $3 billion to $4.7 billion last year. Even this still falls far short of what is needed: the UN estimates that $12 billion will be needed next year and $20 billion in 2006.

Nearly 5 million more people became infected with AIDS in 2003, more than in any previous year.

Classifieds

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Edmonton – CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock – CFOK	7:30 am	1370

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Estevan – CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn – CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona – CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach – CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg – CKJS	9:00 am	810

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Atikokan – CFAK	9:30 am	1240
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Guelph – CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton – CHAM	7:30 am	820
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London – CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa – CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound – CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke – CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia – CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford – CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Tilsonburg – CKOT	9:02 am	101.3
Windsor – CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham – CKNX	10:30 am	920
Woodstock – CJFH	7:30 am	94.03

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Saint John – CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

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Charlottetown – CFCY	7:00 am	630

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Bridgewater – CKBW	7:30 am	1000
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Liverpool – CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville – CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton – CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow – CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne – CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
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Classifieds

Birth

Van Tuyl Triplets

It is with great joy and thanksgiving to our Lord, that we announce "Our triplets have come home."

Ethan James (3 lbs. 6 oz.)
Seth John (4 lbs. 1 oz.)
Jayden Joseph (3 lbs. 9 ozs.)

were born on Friday, July 9, 2004 in Hamilton at the McMasters Childrens' Hospital and after 9-10 days were transferred to the Welland County General Hospital.

They have now come home to live with their brother Isaac and their Daddy & Mommy (James & Jane) Van Tuyl in Wellandport.

Their proud grandparents are Opa & Oma (Joe & Ann) Van Tuyl (who live next door) and Grandpa & Grandma (John & Cathy) Snip of Dunnville.

Our God is truly an "awesome God" that he has made all things well.

Birthday

Johanna Visser (Ingwersen)

will celebrate her
90th Birthday on October 12.
We thank God for giving Mom a long life in which she is a role model and a blessing to all of us.
She truly is a "mother in Israel."

With love from her family:
George & Florence, Henry & Linda
14 grandchildren, 33 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren.

She lives at #309 Klondike Place
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Anniversary

1954 October 22 2004
Chatham, Ontario

With joy and thanksgiving to God, we wish to announce the
50th Wedding Anniversary
of our parents and grandparents

GUS AND IRENE WOLTING
(nee **VanderSluis**)

God has blessed them richly during their marriage and we pray that he will continue to bless them with many more years together.
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With much love and joy from your children and grandchildren:
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Ray & Jenny Wolting, *Chatham, Ontario*
Greg, Alicia, Jessica, Corey
Gerry & Linda Wolting, *Chatham, Ontario*
Kristy, Kevin, Valerie, Justin
Henry & Elaine Wolting, *Blenheim, Ontario*
Jordan, Jeremy

Family and friends are invited to celebrate with us during an **Open House** at Chatham Christian Schools, 475 Keil Dr. S., Chatham, Saturday, October 23, 2004, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Best wishes only please!

Home address: RR#3 22746 Creek Rd
Chatham ON N7M 5J3

Anniversaries

1954 - October 5 - 2004

Psalm 37:5
"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this."

With thanksgiving to the Lord for his faithfulness and goodness, we hope to celebrate the
50th Wedding Anniversary
of our parents and grandparents

BEN AND HETTY VAN HUIS

of Smithville, Ontario.

Mom and Dad we pray that God may continue to guide and bless you in your lives together.

Harold Van Huis, *Smithville ON*
Pete & Henriette Buitenwerf, *Wellandport ON*
Danyse, Erin, Peter, Kaitlin, Timothy, Corey, Kendrick
John & Darlene Izon, *Beeton ON*
Alyse, Allison(†), Dael, Leah
Ben & Catharine Van Huis, *Smithville ON*
Katrina, Jonathan, Benjamin, Braden

Family and friends are invited to an **Open House** on Saturday October 16, 2004 D.V. from 2 - 4 p.m. at Wellandport Orthodox Reformed Church on 74082 Wellandport Rd, Wellandport, Ontario.
Best Wishes only please.

Corresponding address: 6 Garden Dr
Smithville ON L0R 2A0

Renfrew Ottawa
1954 October 15 2004

With thanksgiving to God we joyfully announce the
50th Wedding Anniversary of

JOHN AND GONNY OEGEMA-DEVRIES

We wish you God's continued blessings.

Congratulations and love from your children and grandchildren.

Ellen & John Hessels, *Brampton,ON*
Gregory and Janice
Bart & Lori Oegema, *Nepean ON*
Jennifer and Lesley-Anne
John & Anneke Oegema, *Rapids City,SD*
Bart, Nicholaas, Tim, Alida
Rick & Ganble Oegema, *Knoxville, Tenn*
Brittany, Kristopher, Cory
Peter Oegema, *Nepean,ON*

An **Open House** will be held D.V. on Saturday October 9, 2004 from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. at Barrhaven Fellowship Chr. Reformed Church 3058 Jockvale Road, Nepean, Ontario
Best Wishes only.

Home address: 44 Emmerson Ave #502
Ottawa ON K1Y 2L8

1949 September 25 2004
Smithville Townsend

Psalm 23

HARM AND FRIEDA BAKKER
(nee **Hoekstra**)

The Lord our Shepherd held us for **55 Years** in his care and in his mercy blessed us with our family:

Raymond & Wilma Luckaisiewicz,
Jeremy, Kati, *Fairfax, Virginia*
George & Cathy Bakker
David, Alex, *Hamilton, ON*
Cliff & Sue Warrick, *Mount Hope ON*
Gord & Lisa, *Madison, Wisconsin*

Home address: Parkview Meadows
72 Towncenter Dr, Brookview #310
Townsend ON N0A 1S0
Phone: 519-587-3512

1959 October 8 2004

It is with much joy and happiness that we celebrate the
45th Wedding Anniversary
of our parents and grandparents

FRANS AND ELISABETH DE JONG (nee **Heida**)

"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good:
for his mercy endureth forever."
Psalm 136:1

Love & congratulations from your family:
Femmy & Jamie Ester
Tyler, Ryan, *Dorchester, ON*
Hessel De Jong, *Ingersoll, ON*
John DeJong, *Ingersoll, ON*
Jake & Tracy DeJong
Nathan, Seth, *Ingersoll, ON*
Brenda DeJong, *Ingersoll, ON*

1954 October 8 2004

"If your Presence does not go with us; do not send us up from here."
Exodus 33:15

With joy and thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, we announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary**, the Lord willing on Oct. 8, 2004 of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

GERRIT JAN AND GERRITDINA CRAMER
(nee **Breukelman**)

May the Lord continue to richly bless you and to make you a blessing to all of us.

Your family:
Alice & Andy Vis, *Redcliff AB*
Theresa & Fraser deWalle, *Waterdown,ON*
Dirk, Keith, Kara
Fred & Alice Cramer, *Thunder Bay ON*
Carolyn, David, Richard, Lynda
Albert & Angie Cramer, *Medicine Hat,AB*
Ryan, Courtney, Jenna, Gary
Miriam & Harry Nutma, *Calgary AB*
Jeremy & Johanna – Sydney Gregory, *Thunder Bay ON*
Andrew & Heather (fiancé)
Alex, Alyda, Levi, Caleb
Lydia & Bert Buitenhuis, *Thunder Bay,ON*
Bryon, Deanna, Heather, Jason, Rachel
Connie & Derrick Dykstra, *Thunder Bay,ON*
Peter, Michael, Jesse, Emily, Allison, Laura, Joanna, Glen
Randy & Tammy Cramer, *Thunder Bay,ON*
Amanda, Angelina, Lindsay, Devin
Ray & Anita Cramer, *Calgary,AB*
Daniel, Christopher, Alaina, Aaron
Gerrit & Kelly Cramer, *Thunder Bay,ON*
Jami, Linden, Shelby, Colin, Joel

Please join us at the **Open House** to be held Friday Oct. 8, 2004 D.V. from 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. at the Thunder Bay U.R.C.

Home address: RR#3
Thunder Bay ON P7C 4V2

Obituary

Peacefully on Monday September 6, 2004

HENRY JURJENS

In his 83rd year.

Beloved husband and companion of Henrica for 53 ½ years.

Loving Dad of:
Gerry & Johanna Jurjens, *Shakespeare*
Henry & Ina Jurjens, *Lucknow*
Louis & Joy Jurjens, *Lucknow*
John & Cheryl Jurjens, *Goderich*
Dennis Jurjens & Margaret Spoelstra, *Toronto*
Richard & Brenda Jurjens, *Strathroy*
Jim Jurjens & Lisa Polzin, *London*
Joanne & Walter Kroezen, *Acton*

Lovingly remembered by his 15 grandchildren & 3 great-grandchildren.

Survived by
Mina & Gerrit Jan Ramaker,
Janna & Lambert Zandman,
Jan Willem & Dini Jurjens;
sisters-in-law, Rika Mink,
Annigien Wilpshaar and
Derkje Lennips *all of Holland*,
Wilma & Herm Reinink of *Clinton* and
Bill & Betty Lennips of *Chesley*.

The funeral service was held at Westmount CRC, Strathroy September 9, 2004.

Correspondence may be sent to:
Henrica Jurjens
134 - 400 Dominion St
Strathroy ON N7G 3G8

Congratulations

The congregation of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville congratulates their pastor: **C. Harry Salomons**

on the occasion of the **35th Anniversary** of his ordination.
We greatly appreciate the faithful preaching of God's Word and his loving, effective pastoral work in our congregation.
We wish him God's richest blessing as he continues his work in the years to come.

Obituaries

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.
For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:18

After a courageous battle with cancer on September 13 the Lord took unto himself his child

HARMEN HARINGA

He was born November 8, 1938 in Garyp, Friesland. Dear husband and friend of Trixie for 41 years.

Dear dad and grandfather of
Dave & Ellie Haringa
Kaylee, McKenzie, Max
Sandie & Serge Dallaire
Nathan, Leah
Lucy & Paul Morphy Madeline
Jan & Darlene Haringa
Ashley, Jordan
Robert & his friend Kristina

Only & dear brother & brother-in-law of:
Audrey & Fred VanderVelde
Neeke & Wiebe Bakker
Beddy & Arie De Boom
Hennie & Barend Bonvanie
and the Semplonius family.

The buriel took place at the Bowmanville cementary. A Memorial service was held at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church in Whitby on September 17, 2004.

Correspondence: Mrs. T. Haringa
8 Nearctic Ct
Whitby ON L1N 6P7

1938 Garyp, Fr. September 13, 2004
The Netherlands Whitby, Ontario

HERMAN HARINGA

II Corinthians 4:18
"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

The Lord took unto himself his child after a very long courageous battle with cancer on Monday, September 13, 2004, at the age of 65 years. He was the former owner of East End Quality Meats in Whitby for 37 years.

As sisters and family we will miss our dear jovial brother Herman very much, and pray that God will continue to strengthen and comfort our dear sister-in-law Trixie (Semplonius) and her children.

The funeral took place on September 17, 2004.

Loving brother of:
Audrey (Aukje) & Fred VanderVelde
Burlington, ON
Anneke & Wiebe Bakker
The Netherlands
Beddy & Arie De Boom
The Netherlands
Hennie & Barend Bonvanie
Woodstock, ON

Correspondence: Mrs. T. Haringa
8 Neartic Court
Whitby ON L1N 6P7

Classifieds /Advertising

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Rob Datema has faithfully served as Youth Pastor of Maranatha CRC in Woodstock since 1995. He has completed his term of service at Maranatha CRC. We are grateful for the work he has accomplished and we heartily recommend him to the churches. Candidate Rob Datema can be contacted at
Maranatha CRC
577 Norwich Ave RR8
Woodstock ON N4S 7W3
phone 519-539-5301 or
rdatema@execulink.com

Diaconal Ministries

A DAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND TRAINING

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Saturday October 16
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Choose from 50 workshops and 15 "Service Sites."
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Contact your deacons for a registration form, or contact Diaconal Ministries at (905)336-2920 or visit us at www.diaconalministries.com

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William Van Dyke, Principal
Maranatha Christian Academy
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Phone: 519-966-7424 **Fax:** 519-966-9519
Email: office@maranathachristian.ca
Web: www.maranathachristian.ca

Scarborough CRC, Toronto

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at vennen@attglobal.net or 416-690-4774

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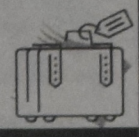

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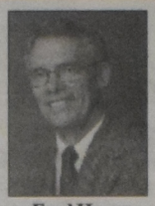

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Crossword Solution

(for puzzle in Sep 13 issue)

E	R	A	S	■	R	A	N	G	E	■	R	O	S	H
T	A	L	C	■	I	L	I	U	M	■	O	L	E	O
A	S	T	A	■	O	M	N	I	P	O	T	E	N	T
S	P	I	R	I	T	■	A	D	A	R	■	I	N	E
■	■	T	E	B	E	T	■	E	T	E	R	N	A	L
I	C	U	■	A	D	N	A	■	H	O	E	■	■	■
C	O	D	E	R	■	O	N	L	Y	■	N	I	L	E
O	P	E	N	S	■	T	I	E	■	S	A	M	O	A
N	A	S	D	■	R	E	A	R	■	E	L	M	O	S
■	■	■	O	L	E	■	M	O	T	T	■	U	T	E
K	N	O	W	I	N	G	■	Y	E	A	S	T	■	■
E	A	P	■	L	E	A	R	■	P	E	T	A	L	S
E	V	E	R	Y	W	H	E	R	E	■	E	B	O	N
P	A	R	A	■	E	A	N	I	E	■	A	L	V	A
S	L	A	M	■	D	R	O	P	S	■	D	E	E	P

the Netherlands

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sep 24 The **Ambassadors Concert** of favorites at 8 pm. in the First CRC, **Hamilton**. Reception following. Admission, $15 from an Ambassador or at the door.

Sep 30 **Public reading** by Canadian author & poet Joy Kogowa at 7:30 pm. at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. Free admission.

Oct 16 Leendert Kooij and the Choir and brass of the **Ont. Chr. Music Assembly** at Maranatha CRC, Hwy 2, **Bowmanville**, 7:30 pm. An offering for Partners International. Rev. Brian Lise speaker.

Oct 16 A Day of Encouragement and training for deacons, elders and all other interested church members at Hamilton District Christian High School in **Ancaster**. Theme: "Delight in Him!". Choose from 50 workshops and 15 "Service Sites". All sessions are open to everyone.Cost: $50. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or contact Diaconal Ministries at (905)336-2920 or visit us at www.diaconalministries.com.

Oct 23 Leendert Kooij and the Choir and brass of the Ont. Chr. Music Assembly at St. George's Anglican Ch. Woolwich St. **Guelph**, 7:30 pm. An offering for Partners International. Rev. Brian Lise, Speaker.

Oct 23 Worldwide Christian Schools fundraiser - Concert, **Liberation Choir** 8 pm. at Rehoboth United Reformed Church, 77 Glancaster Rd, **Hamilton**, ON. Please contact WCS to purchase tickets: (905) 387-0235 or canada@wwcs.org

Oct 23 TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL invites all alumni and supporters to its 40th Anniversary and New Building Dedication. Tours and celebration program, 2170 Itabashi Way, **Burlington**, ON. Ph: 905-634-3052. www.tcsonline.ca See next issue for more info.

Oct 25 **Heritage Day** (formerly Senior's Day) Registration 9:30 am. Program & activities 10 am to 3 pm. at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. Call 905-648-2131 ext. 4208 to register. See ad.

Oct 28, 29 **OCSTA** 50th anniversary convention at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster,** and the Hamilton District Christian High School; inspirational address: Dr. Anthony Campolo; educational address: Prof. Hugh Cook. website: www.ocsta.org

Oct 30 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Wallaceburg** CRC, 150 Bruinsma Ave. **Wallaceburg** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Nov. 5 **Christian Festival Concert**, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, 7:30 pm. Order tickets from Ontario Christian Music Assembly, Ph: 416-636-9779 or email: landmkooy@rogers.com

Nov 6 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Maranatha** CRC, 2811 Highway #2 East **Bowmanville** (Free will offering) Info:(519) 637-4357

Nov. 6,7 **Calvin** CRC, **Dundas**, Ont. will celebrate their **50th year**. Come join our celebration! Festivities are being planned. For info: Fred VanderVelde at 905-336-5619 Fax: 905-336-2376 or Brenda DeGroot at 905-689-6350 or email: p-b.degroot@sympatico.ca

Nov 12 Concert, **Clinton** CRC 7:30 pm. A program of organ, piano, and vocal music by the Kruisselbrink Sisters from Tara, Ont. and the Men of Note. Info: 519-482-5372

Nov. 13 The Lighthouse Christian Community Centre annual **International Dinner and Silent Auction**. Help celebrate and support this inner-city ministry. New, better banquet facility: Columbus Hall, Lawrence and Dufferin, **Toronto**. Reservations required in advance: Lighthouse 416 535-6262 or email janet@lighthousecentre.ca

Nov 27 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 17 Robinson Road, off Hwy. #3 **Dunnville** (Freewill Offering) Info:(905) 387-0235

Dec 12 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Dec 19 **Christmas Concert** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 9 Victoria Street North, **Goderich.** Info: (519) 637-4357

2005

Apr 9 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Bethel** CRC, 716 Classic Drive, **London** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

May 1 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Free will offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

Heritage Day
Monday, October 25

Join us for an inspiring time with Redeemer professors & students

Morning Program:

Prof. Raymond Louter *"Psalms and a Spiritual Revolution."*

The Psalms contain within the seeds of a new and exciting kind of spirituality for believers today--a kind of deep trusting faith that is willing to listen to the voice of God. This promises to be a special time of reflection and learning.

Afternoon Activities:

Guests will have an opportunity to meet with their grandchildren and also hear selections by the Concert Choir. Join us for this wonderful day of fellowship!

- **Registration 9:30 am**
- **Program & Activities 10:00 am to 3:00 pm**
- **Lunch included in $15 registration fee**

Please call 905-648-2131 ext. 4208 to register.

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Public Reading:
Joy Kogawa, Canadian Author & Poet
Author of: *Obasan, The Rain Ascends* and *The Splintered Moon*

Thursday, September 30th at 7:30pm

Redeemer University College Auditorium: **Free Admission**
A book signing will follow the reading.

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African Christians anxious about Muslim expansion

Tensions between Christians and Muslims have been deepening in many countries. In Nigeria they have been the source of conflict for decades, but have been exacerbated in recent years by the introduction of sharia. In Indonesia they have become intertwined with a struggle for independence by the Moluccans and Timorese. In Sudan a militant Islamic government attempted to impose itself on Christians and animists in the south by brutal force.

But tensions are increasing in many other countries as well. Traditional Muslims in some countries in Africa have complained that radical Muslim schools financed by monies from Saudi Arabia are displacing their own traditions. Recently Muslims and Christians are at loggerheads in Kenya and in Cameroon as well.

In Kenya there have been clashes before, but mostly the two religions have lived side by side in peace. The War on Terror is seen by most Muslims as a war against Islam, and as a result growing numbers of Muslims are turning to more radical and militant versions of their religion, also in Kenya reported CBN.

What has brought differences to a head in Kenya is the drafting of its constitution. Muslims demanded a place for sharia in the new constitution and got it. Marriage, divorce and inheritance cases will be handled by sharia courts for Muslims, who are a minority in the country. This has many Christians up in arms, for they want to safeguard the status of Kenya as a secular state, insisting that all citizens be subject to the same law.

Many have also seen Christians reduced to second class citizens by sharia, in northern Nigeria, for example, so they are very touchy. Initially Muslims in Kenya also wanted the Islamic courts to adjudicate criminal law as well, which introduces harsh punishments like stoning and amputation in some versions of sharia. But this part was rejected.

Twenty-six church leaders have filed a lawsuit calling for the removal of any special status for Islamic law in the new constitution.

David Oginde, a pastor of an evangelical church in Nairobi called the introduction of sharia courts "a recipe for strife." He is convinced that there is a hidden agenda to Islamicize all of Africa. Their goal, says Oginde as quoted by CBN, is to make Africa "the first Islamic continent of the world."

One Kenyan Muslim remarked, "When Christians say they want to convert every person in Kenya, nobody complains, but if we say as Muslims that we want everybody to become a Muslim, everybody is up in arms!"

In Cameroon, there are reports that extremist from neighboring Nigeria are stirring up trouble. They are urging Muslims to refuse to rent or sell land to Christians, according to reports from Christian pastors. However, sometimes such stories are exaggerated in order to raise funds abroad for the expansion of Christian mission work.

Typical market in Kenya

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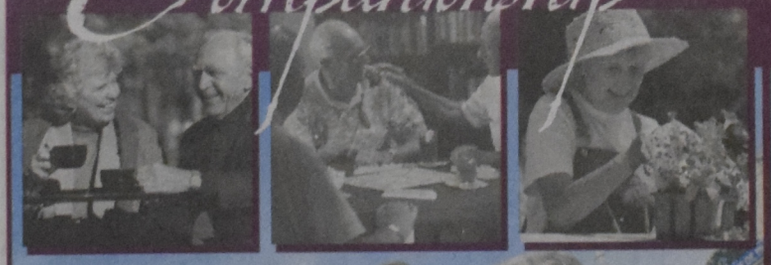

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